CINEFANTASTIQUE

February

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HOLLYWOOD MAVERICK TERRY GILLIAM

THE MAKING OF "TWELVE MONKEYS"

A CAREER PROFILE FROM MONTY PYTHON TO GENRE AUTEUR

Bruce Willis and Madeleine Stowe, amid the apocalyptic virus of Gilliam's TWELVE MONKEYS

Volume 27 Number 6

FILMING "GULLIVER'S TRAVELS" LIVE!

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Like many viewers, I was introduced to Terry Gilliam's work through MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL, which he co-directed with Terry Jones. Being a hard-core proponent of the auteur theory, I gave him and Jones a lot of credit for the film's look, which grounded the outrageous comedy in an authentic, grungy atmosphere. However, his first solo directing effort, JABBERWOCKY, was such a disappointment that I was tempted to dismiss his contribution as a director and assume he just had a good visual design sense. The subsequent Python films, which Jones directed by himself, seemed to confirm this thought, that Gilliam should restrict himself to animation, effects, and production design, and leave storytelling and the staging of the action to someone else.

The whimsical TIME BANDITS certainly overturned that notion. Gilliam proved himself capable of crafting a completely satisfying fantasy film experience. The film began a trilogy which went on to include BRAZIL and THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN. Although critics still accused Gilliam of lacking a strong narrative sense, this was really the same kind of short-sighted bickering leveled at 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Gilliam was a filmmaker capable of using the full range of the filmic medium to convey his message; if a tight plot structure wasn't always his strong point, so what? It wasn't Charlie Chaplin's either, but when you're a genius, you can overcome your weaknesses with even greater strengths in other areas.

THE FISHER KING proved that Gilliam could put story first, when working from someone else's script, and 12 MONKEYS continues that tradition, combined with the visual strength of his earlier work. Although Gilliam's directed only a handful of fantasy films, they are distinctive and unique; they make more sense when viewed as parts of an *oeuvre*; thus, this cover story devoted to his career is more than justified; in fact, it is long overdue.

Steve Biodrowski

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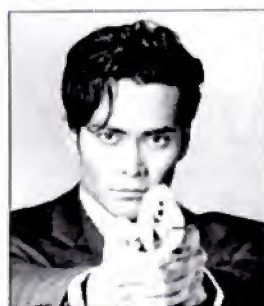

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EAGERLY AWAITED

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN (Dimension)

Even though those eccentric boys of exploitation films, director Robert Rodriguez and screenwriter Quentin Tarantino, failed to make their original December 22 release date, they still plan on dragging you down into their uncertain dichotomy of ravenous Mexican vampires, bickering bad guys, confused Christians and hilariously snappy one-liners followed by exploding demons of the underworld. You just have to wait a little longer until their film gets smuggled over the border and delivered to your neighborhood motion picture theater.

Be forewarned: their movie may be laced with subliminal messages of pathos, courage, love, honor and the endurance of the human spirit. "There's sub-text in all my work," admitted Tarantino. "There's definitely a big subtext and a second drama going on underneath the scenes in FROM DUSK TILL DAWN. That's what makes it special. I'm not going to say what it is because it's not about that. It's there, for me, for the actors. Alright? And it's there for you if you want it.

"If you don't want it and you just want to see a movie about a couple of gangsters [Tarantino and George Clooney] that take a hold of a family [Harvey Keitel and Juliette Lewis] and end up fighting for their lives to get out of a bar full of vampires [Salma Hayek and Cheech Marin], well that's there. And, if you just want that, that's all you need to get. But, if you want to get into discussions about the loss of faith and everything else, that's there too.In PULP [FICTION] or [RESERVOIR] DOGS or anything like that, it's always just underneath it. It's there if you want it. And, I do want it. That's what makes it worth doing. I just don't like to highlight it because I'm not making a message movie here."

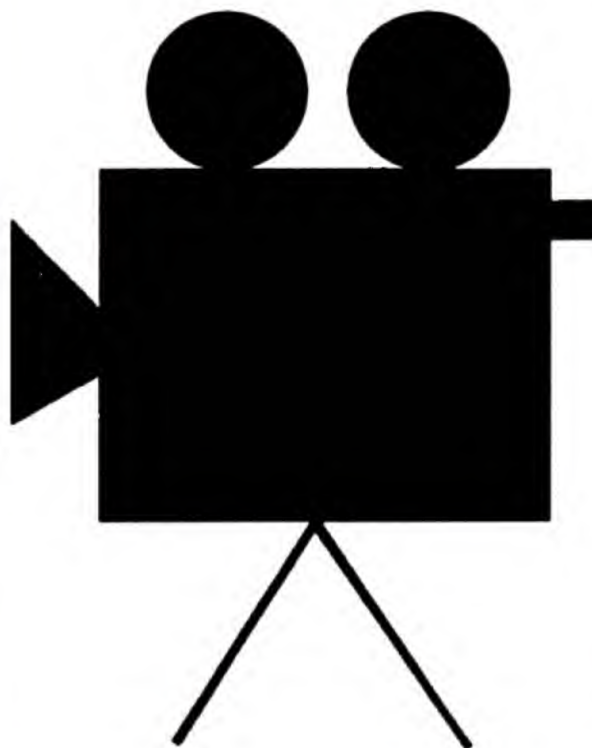
Okay. So, FROM DUSK TILL DAWN's not a message movie and it's no longer a Christmas movie. But it's Tarantino. "It may not be the horror film to end all horror films for me." He said, "This is not my last word on it. But, it's like, 'for as of now—it scratched that itch.'" SEE CFQ 27:4/5:18. Michael Beeler

February 2

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Jay Stevenson (unless otherwise noted)



BORDELLO OF BLOOD (Universal) — February

The Crypt Keeper is back, but will lightning strike twice, now that producer Gil Adler has taken over the directing reins?

CITY OF LOST CHILDREN (Triumph) — Now playing

The latest effort from the DELICATESSEN directing duo of Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Mar Caro began touring the art house circuit late in December, pushed back from a previously announced release date of November 11. SEE CFQ 27:3:10

FOUR ROOMS (Miramax) — Now playing

Bet you didn't know this was a genre film—well, one-fourth a genre film. One episode of this four-part anthology features a coven of witches convening in a room of a hotel. Alison Anders (MI VIDA LOCA) wrote and directed the episode in question, starring Madonna; others were contributed by Quentin Tarentino, Robert Rodriguez, and Alexandre Rockwell (IN THE SOUP). Tim Roth is the only link between the episodes, a hapless bellboy suffering through his first night on the job.

MARY REILLY (Tri-Star) — February 2

The long delayed film finally finds its way into theatres, after abandoning a planned one-week run in December to qualify for this year's Oscars. Allegedly, the delays allowed for reshooting the ending. However, the real acid test (besides Julia Roberts' performance as a Victorian maid) will be whether the filmmakers can capture the essence of Valerie Martin's novel, which assumes a familiarity with Robert Louis Stevenson's original tale, not the many filmic incarnations. The point is that we are reading a story we already know but seeing it from a fascinating new viewpoint (in a vaguely similar way to Tom Stoppard's play *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*). This works on the page because Mary Reilly is telling us the story in her own words, in the form of a diary. Let's hope director Stephen Frears and screenwriter Christopher Hampton have come up with a cinematic equivalent of the first-person voice; otherwise, we may end up with just another rehash of the same old story. Goes wide on January 12. SEE *CFQ* 26:3

SCREAMERS (Triumph) — January 19

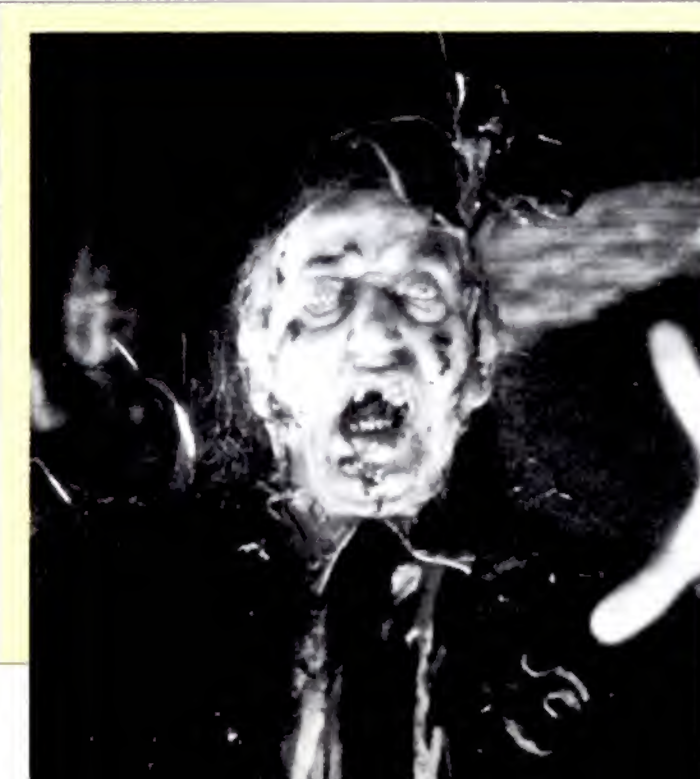
As directed by Christian Duguay, there's very little of Philip K. Dick or Dan O'Bannon—or, indeed, anything good—left in Miguel Tejeda Flores' rewrite. The Screamers of the title are blade-wielding, self-replicating killing devices designed as weapons for a distant planet inhabited by a mining colony from Earth. The rather tortured premise, glossed over in the exposition, is that the warring factions have been abandoned by Earth now that a new mine has been found on another planet, but Earth is still pretending to be concerned. (Apparently, the colonists are *just* important enough that they're worth deceiving but not important enough that they're worth evacuating.) In any case, the whole thing is just an excuse to get a small group of humans isolated with no hope of rescue, so that the Screamers can go out of control and attack both sides. Lots of explosions and dismemberment substitute for genuine thrills, and boy do those killing machines ever earn their name! SEE *CFQ* 27:2:40

12 MONKEYS (Universal) — Now playing

According to co-screenwriter Janet Peoples, executive producer Robert Kosberg brought Chris Marker's short film LA JETEE "to us on tape and asked what we thought of it. We thought it was a perfect film. Then he asked us to look at it again and see if there was anything there that might inspire us to do something. We said we thought that Jim Cameron, in THE TERMINATOR, had [already] done something inspired by LA JETEE." Still she and her collaborator-husband, David Webb Peoples, found a way to tackle the idea. "We never felt we were remaking LA JETEE," she explained. "Actually, we had free rein to come up with a story that was satisfying to ourselves that we hoped would also be satisfying to the audience." Added David, "You always want to please an audience, but you don't want to do it in a cynical or negative way. You want to do something good." SEE PAGE 16

UNFORGETTABLE (MGM) — February 2

Razor-sharp neo-noir auteur John Dahl finally gets his chance with a big-budget studio film. (His previous three gems—KILL ME AGAIN, RED ROCK WEST, and THE LAST SEDUCTION—were independent efforts that received limited theatrical play.) Written by Dahl and his brother, Rick, from a script by Bill Geddie, the murder-mystery plotline is clearly in line with his previous films, but with a science-fiction twist: the story follows a medical examiner (Ray Liotta, of NO ESCAPE) who, obsessed with trying to solve his wife's murder, turns to a medical researcher (Linda Fiorentino, of THE LAST SEDUCTION) who has developed a formula that will enable him to experience the memories of those who can help in finding the murderer.



BURY IT

CEMETERY MAN (October)

Originally titled DELLAMORTE DELAMORE, this is like a bloody Monty Python sketch, except for three things: it's not funny; the story isn't as sophisticated; and it goes on forever. A plotless mess most notable for its thoroughly developed misogyny (for example, a frigid secretary is "cured" by being raped), the film actually has some good images; unfortunately, they are buried beneath the dull direction of Michele Soavi, who is unable to distinguish between the entertaining and the boring and, so, emphasizes everything equally. This has the elements for a great trailer, which would save everyone the trouble of actually sitting through the movie.

February 9

USE THE FORCE, LUCAS

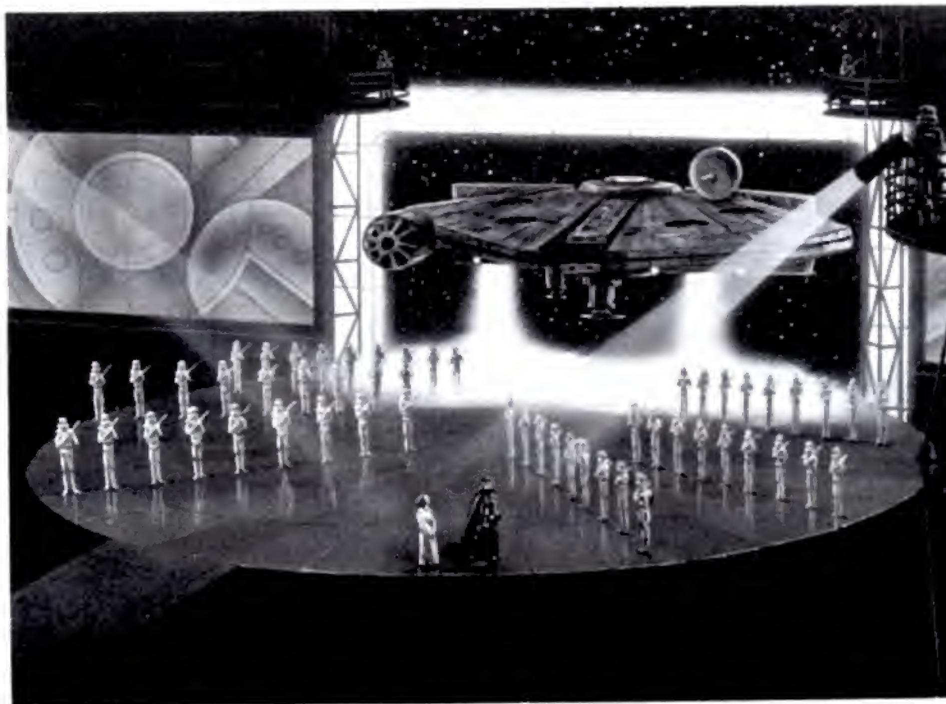
Will George go back to STAR WARS?

by Sue Uram

With the release of STAR WARS back in 1977, followed by THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK in 1980 and RETURN OF THE JEDI in 1983, a whole new world was created and sold to a public hungry for science-fiction adventure. George Lucas recently released a boxed set of the three movies for a price of $49.95. Because of the hoopla connected with the ad campaigns, there was another (false) hope of a theatrical re-release of the trilogy last year. But Lucas explains the boxed set as a way to get a high-quality version to the public. "We first issued the tape," he said, "when video was in its early stages. Because of our new THX [digital enhancement], we are able to get a higher quality picture and sound."

The release of the enhanced videos is only the tip of the iceberg on Hoth. For the 20th Anniversary of STAR WARS next year, Lucas will put the new version into theatres, with restored and/or improved footage. Expect to see a new scene with Jabba the Hutt and Han Solo, which will give the viewer a little better idea of why Han acts the way he does. Originally, the creatures ridden by the Storm Troopers in the desert were big, rubber dummies. With his new technology, Lucas is now able to make them walk and move. "I have been able to improve shots and animate the characters in a way I had hoped to at the time, but was not able to because of the constraint of the period," he explained.

Lucas plans to have the first of the planned prequels out, as early as 1998, followed by another in 2000 and then 2002. Fans of the saga, who have been waiting since 1986 for the next trilogy, remain curious as to why it took so long to come out with the remaining films. "Part of it was the fact that I needed to get the filmmaking technology up to a point where I was not going to be quite as frustrated as I had been," he explained. "With the new technology we have developed at Lucasfilms over the last few years, I can tell a lot more stories and have more fun telling them."



Lucas has kept the franchise alive with merchandising and productions like Kenneth Feld's live tour in 1993 (above), promising a new movie in 1998.

When Lucas wrote the script, he worked out the back story first. "You have to figure out... where the characters came from and work out the story up to the point where you can start the movie," he said. "So I wrote a back story and screenplay, but the screenplay was too big and complicated for me to make into a movie." Lucas then took the first act of the original script and said, "I'll make a movie out of this, and if it's successful enough, I'll go out and try to finish the other two acts." When STARS WARS was such an enormous success, he said, "Now I can actually make the other pieces of the puzzle."

The current plan is to bring back some of our favorite characters, with new actors. Obi-wan Kenobi and Yoda will re-appear, but Lucas is giving no hints of who he has in mind to play them. "When you see the six movies together," he said, "you will see that the whole thing is really Darth Vader's story and Luke Skywalker's story. The first episode takes place with Darth Vader being Luke's father, and shows him becoming a Jedi knight and falling from grace."

If Lucas has not exhausted his imagination on the first trilogy, we can hope that the new movies will create as big a disturbance as the originals. May the Force be with you still, Lucas.

Short Notes

Neither IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS nor VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED (despite the former's excellence) elevated John Carpenter back into the boxoffice stratosphere of HALLOWEEN and ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, but that hasn't stopped Paramount from greenlighting the long awaited ESCAPE FROM L.A. Kurt Russell returns as Snake Plisken, and also serves as producer, along with Carpenter and Debra Hill. Barbara Steele, Martine Beswicke, and Mary Woronov are planning to team up in a tongue-in-cheek item entitled VAMPIRE CULT QUEENS FROM HELL. The script, by Woronov herself, posits that three scream queens doing the sci-fi convention circuit don't just play vampires in the movies; the really are vampires. Peter Biggs' FREDDY VS. JASON script has been abandoned. Producer Sean Cunningham has a new script in development—from STAR TREK: GENERATIONS scribes Ron Moore and Brannon Braga!

Kevin McCarthy interacts with Sci-Fi CD-ROM.

by Steve Biodrowski

Although Kevin McCarthy has had a diverse career, ranging from Arthur Miller's DEATH OF A SALESMAN to John Huston's THE MISFITS, his role in the 1950s' science-fiction classic INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS has made him a recognizable genre icon, so it only made sense to include him in the cast of an interactive science-fiction CD-ROM.

The CD in question is Access Software's $3 million epic *The Pandora Directive*, the second in a series (begun with *Under a Killing Moon*) that feature Tex Murphy (played by Access vice-president Chris Jones), a sleuth living in San Francisco, A.D. 2043. This time Tex is investigating the possibility that UFOs did crash at Roswell, New Mexico. The cast also includes Tanya Roberts and John Agar.

How did McCarthy find his way into his first CD-ROM acting gig? "They sent me the script, and there was something old-fashioned about it and something new," said the veteran actor. "It crosses time warps, you might say—a little like DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS goes back to another time. The geezer I'm playing is supposed to be some kind of scientist. He's an intriguing guy in some ways, because there's a mystery about him. It could be that he doesn't even know his own history, but it's clear from his actions that he must [be connected in some way] with a space ship that's been located in the jungles of Peru. When you don't quite know about somebody, it's a little bit more interesting than when you do know about him, in the same way that in INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS you don't know much about these aliens and, therefore, they're intriguing and frightening. Later on, they started showing you everything, and it turned into spectacle; you say, 'Golly, that's wild!' But you're not nearly as absorbed."

McCarthy worked for three days at Access' facilities in Salt Lake City. "It seemed like it was longer, because you're the only one there, except for Chris—I had quite a few scenes in which he was

continued on page 62

Obituaries

by Alan Jones & Jay Stevenson

Derek Meddings

One of the pioneers of special visual effects met an untimely death in September. Derek Meddings was admitted to hospital with a cancer-related problem, and he never recovered from complications that arose during routine surgery. The 64-year-old technician began his prestigious career studying the world of cinema and visual effects, which led to his first major assignment as "Director of Crafts and Miniature Supervisor" for Gerry Anderson's Century 21 operation. There, he provided the extensive miniature effects work for Anderson's Super Marionation TV puppet fantasy series THUNDERBIRDS, in 1966.

Meddings' vast experience soon led to the cinema screen. After supervising miniature effects on numerous features (including THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, SUPERGIRL, SANTA CLAUS–THE MOVIE, SUPERMAN–THE MOVIE [for which he won both American and British Academy Awards], and SUPERMAN II), he graduated to visual effects supervisor on HIGH SPIRITS, THE NEVERENDING STORY II & III, HUDSON HAWK, CAPE FEAR, and BATMAN. Because Meddings often helmed the second unit photographing his effects work, he was able to move into directing commercials, the most recent being for Shell and Fiat. He also set up "The Magic Camera Company" at Shepperton Studios, a one-stop special effects facility used by many productions.

But it will be for his sterling miniature work on the James Bond series that Meddings will most fondly be remembered. He literally had to force Cubby Broccoli into using miniatures on LIVE AND LET DIE. However, once the producer realized how effective they looked, and how relatively inexpensive they were, Meddings added a new excitement level to the 007 action adventures. He subsequently worked on THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN, THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, MOONRAKER, and FOR YOUR EYES ONLY. He returned to the Bond fold in 1995 with GOLDENEYE, which bears an 'In Memoriam' dedication to Meddings' miniature genius. Bill Pearson, a miniature effects colleague, said, "Derek's death signals the end of an era. We were all so shocked when we heard the news. He was a brilliant craftsman who changed the face of the special effects industry, and he'll be sorely missed."

Michael Ende

The German author died of stomach cancer in August 28, at the age of 65. His self-reflexive children's book *The NeverEnding Story* was adapted into a big-budget fantasy film by director Wolfgang Petersen in 1979; its success led to two cinematic sequels, the latter of which has yet to be released domestically.

Viveca Lindfors

The 74-year-old Swedish actress died in October of complications from rheumatoid arthritis. Though hardly a genre name, the Emmy-winner was last seen in STARGATE; she also gave memorable performances in George Romero's CREEPSHOW and in Joseph Losey's THE DAMNED (US: THESE ARE THE DAMNED). The later was one of Hammer's most high-brow efforts, a brilliant piece of bleak and chilling nihilism.

Production Starts

CROSSROADS

Rutger Hauer (BLADE RUNNER) toplines the cast of this low-budget science-fiction effort from Trimark Pictures.

THE DENTIST

L.A. LAW's Corbin Bernsen stars in this horror film directed by Brian Yuzna, from a script by his REANIMATOR collaborators Dennis Paoli and Stuart Gordon (along with an assist from Charles Finch). This narrowly beats a rival project of the same title, still in development, which was to have been directed by Tobe Hooper before Mark Borde took over.

THE PHANTOM

Simon Wincer directs this $40 million comic book adaptation, with a cast featuring Billy Zane (as the title character), Treat Williams, Kristy Swanson, and Patrick McGoohan. The script is by Jeffrey Boam (THE DEAD ZONE).

THE RELIC

Stan Winston and CGI experts VIFX combine forces to create a creature in this thriller starring Penelope Anne Miller (THE SHADOW) and Tom Sizemore (STRANGE DAYS) as a biologist and a police lieutenant on the trail of a murderous, mythological monster let loose in a natural history museum. Peter Hyams directs from a script by Amy Holden Jones.

SHOCKWAVE

Charlie Sheen, Ron Silver, and Lindsay Crouse star in this science-fiction effort scripted by WATERWORLD's David Twohy, who also directs.

X-FILES: THE MOVIE

Series creator Chris Carter promises big things for the big screen.

The lavish visuals of the X-FILES TV show are a natural for making the leap to the big screen. That rather than increased gore, will be the reason for the film.

by Paula Vitaris

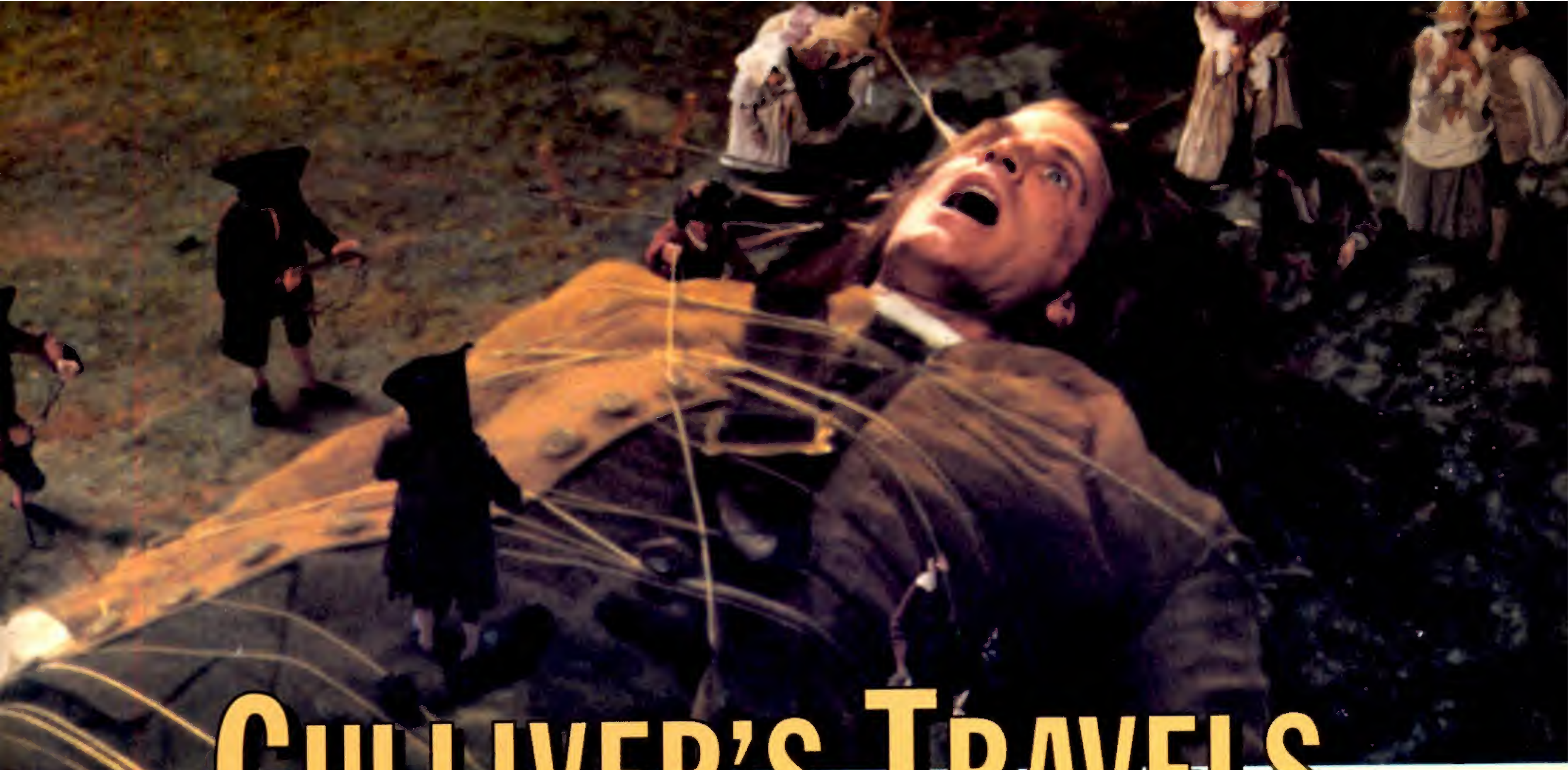
X-FILES creator and executive producer Chris Carter likes to describe each episode of his Fox Network hit series as a "mini-feature," but he'll soon be able to drop the "mini," because a theatrical movie version is headed toward a cinema near you. The question is: when? Although February 1997 has been reported in the press as a tentative release date, Carter says he doesn't know when the movie will shoot. "They're waiting for me to do a script," he explained. "It's just a matter of when we would actually find the time to do it." He added the plan is to release the film while the series is still in first-run, but "whether or not that happens, I don't know." He is secretive concerning the storyline, except to say that it will be "something really good."

Carter is looking forward to translating television's most luscious visuals into feature format, but that doesn't necessarily mean he plans to make the X-FILES movie more graphic or more violent than a regular episode. "I'm sure we would take advantage of the format to do a lot of things; but be more graphic, I'm not sure. We're definitely going to do great, big things, using the lenses and the 1.85 aspect ratio."

The X-FILES noir cinematography and actors David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson should all look terrific on the big screen, but the thought of a 200-inch tall Flukeman or exploding boil inspired more than a few shivers—without a doubt, precisely the effect for which scaremeister Carter is aiming.

The Sci-Fi Universe Awards

Last October's first *Sci-Fi Universe Readers' Choice Awards* turned out to be an entertaining event that restored a certain measure of dignity sadly lacking in other genre awards ceremonies (e.g., those notoriously lame shows by the Academy of Science-Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films). It was nice to see **Ernie Hudson** receive recognition for his supporting role in CONGO (he is after all the only good thing in the movie). But any doubts about the validity of a readers' poll were certainly confirmed when **Danny Cannon** won best director for JUDGE DREDD. The nominations also left something to be desired, with obvious titles like DEMON KNIGHT and TALES FROM THE HOOD omitted from the horror category in favor of VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED, which was left out of the science-fiction category to make room for JOHNNY MNEMONIC! Still, the event redeemed itself with two career awards thoughtfully selected by the editors of *Sci-Fi Universe*: the Gene L. Coon Award for Excellence in Science Fiction Writing (given to **Michael Piller**) and the Award for Lifetime Achievement in the genre (delivered to **Leonard Nimoy** amidst a standing ovation).



GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

Producer Duncan Kenworthy tackles Jonathan Swift.

PREVIEW BY ALAN JONES

After the huge world-wide success of FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL, producer Duncan Kenworthy left Jim Henson Productions, where he oversaw numerous class acts like the highly acclaimed television series THE STORYTELLER, to set up his own company Toledo Productions. He could have made any movie he wanted in the post-FOUR WEDDINGS glow. But his one wish was to finally put in front of the cameras a pet project he had nursed for seven years while working at Henson's and, ironically, this first production as an independent took him back to the company where he'd learned his craft.

The project is GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, based on writer Jonathan Swift's 1726 classic book *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver*. Although now a classic of children's literature through abridgement, editing and bowdlerization, the tale of a ship's surgeon wrecked off the coast of Lilliput is far from the cozy fairy-tale most people imagine—a popular view promoted by such film treatments to date as Dave Fleishcher's 1939 animated GULLIVER'S TRAVELS and Jack Sher's 1960 THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER featuring Ray Harryhausen stop-motion special effects.

Noted Kenworthy, "Swift wrote quite a vicious indictment of 18th century politics, sent-up famous contemporary public figures and satirized the court of Queen Anne. But while the book has been analyzed and disseminated by renowned acaemics ever since, most people are under the impression it's just about a man who wakes up on a beach to find that he's been tied to the ground by a horde of six-inch-tall Lilliputians!"

While that key scene is included in Kenworthy's four-hour film for television—"But only after much discussion," smiled the producer—the whole point in presenting a new version of Swift's fable is to cover for the first time ever all four of the worlds Gulliver actually did visit. "It wasn't just Lilliput," said Kenworthy. "Gulliver also went to Brobdingnag, the land of giants, the flying island of Laputa, where impractical men of science do ridiculous research in The Academy, and the land of the intelligent, equine Houynhnhms and the brutish human-like Yahoos. That's why a film version of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS was out of the question although we wrestled with the idea on and off. Television was the only way of being faithful to the sprawling richness of the source material."

Divided into two two-hour films, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS will air on NBC February 2-3. The Robert (LONESOME DOVE) Halmi-Channel Four Television-Jim Henson Productions project is directed by Charles (BRIDESHEAD REVISITED) Surridge, written by Simon (THE QUICK AND THE DEAD) Moore and features an all-star line-up including Mary Steenburgen, James Fox, Geraldine Chaplin, Sir John Gielgud, Omar Sharif, Alfre Woodard, Ned Beatty and Peter O'Toole with CHEERS sit-com favorite Ted Danson headlining as Gulliver.

Noted Kenworthy, "Daniel Day Lewis would have made a wonderful Gulliver in a feature version of the book. But Ted Danson is the perfect Gulliver for television. I want people to see GULLIVER'S TRAVELS and be moved by the fantasy, drama and emotion it contains in abundance. Ted guarantees a certain audience and they will not be disappointed."

Kenworthy had to persuade Danson to some extent to take the role. "Ted had numerous questions about the project before he committed to it, the main one being 'Why me?' I could answer him honestly and say because he has one of the most likeable and appealing personalities on television. To follow Gulliver through four hours of incredible events, the audience needs to lock onto him and care about what happens. He didn't have to fake an English accent, either." □

Top: Ted Danson in Kenworthy's four-hour mini-series for NBC, Swift's first faithful adaptation.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

The makers of STARGATE launch an invasion of Earth.

By Chuck Wagner

Featuring elaborate sets and perhaps the largest army of models and miniatures ever assembled, INDEPENDENCE DAY promises to be the action-packed alien-invasion movie of the summer. Arriving in time to coincide with its title, the film will beat Warners big-budget Tim Burton film, MARS ATTACKS, by several months. INDEPENDENCE DAY's producer and co-writer, Dean Devlin (whose previous collaborations with the film's director, Roland Emmerich, include UNIVERSAL SOLDIER and last year's STARGATE) denies any rivalry, saying: "Everybody keeps trying to make it a competition, but we're totally different movies. They're trying to come out at Christmas, and we're coming out in summer. So there's no race. And Tim Burton's movie is gonna be fantastic. Their's will be a real tribute to Ray Harryhausen. They're doing a lot of stop-motion animation. There's a lot of comedy in that script. It's kitschy. It really has a '50s-movie feel, from everything I can tell. I think they're very different types of films. We had this when STARGATE came out. Everyone kept trying to say that we were splitting the market with STAR TREK: GENERATIONS, that we were in competition. The fact is that we had the largest October opening in the history of movies, and then STAR TREK went on to have one of the largest openings they've ever had. The fact of the matter is sci-fi fans like a GOOD sci fi. If it's a bad sci-fi they won't go."

The premise may be a throwback the 1950s, but several things in INDEPENDENCE DAY are new for the '90s—including a budget large enough to do the film justice. The storyline is simple, with little of the coy theatrics of aliens past: no single landings in isolated areas, no communist-style infiltration or paranoia. These aliens arrive two days before July 4 and, with terrifying powers, set out like exterminators, methodically—and spectacularly—obliterating major human infestations, putting entire cities to flame. Once this operation is complete, they can move in—much as a home-buyer who has first sprayed for termites. The process will take only days—unless a loose collection of humans can stop it. Rising to meet the challenge is an eclectic group of humans, played by Bill Pullman, Mary McDonnell, Jeff Goldblum, Brent Spiner, and Adam Baldwin; also featured in the cast are Harry Connick, Jr., Harvey Fierstein, Judd Hirsch, Robert Loggia, Randy Quaid, and Will Smith.

According to Devlin, "Rather than have a film where you have little spores that are going to hide inside of people and slowly take over, our movie starts with, 'They've arrived, and they're blowing the shit out of the planet. Now what do you do?' Because, as I've said before, it's not so much this evil plan with sinister characters; it's really like a force of nature. Then we track these eight different characters from all around the world and basically see how they deal

The movie opens on its summer name date.

The aftermath of an alien attack on a major city: Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich's take on the familiar plot was to treat it like a natural disaster, global in nature, with the Planet Earth ravaged as if by locusts.

A military base undergoes attack by an incredible alien force; as in STARGATE, things blow up real good.

> **“Rather than little spores slowly taking over, we start with, ‘They're here, blowing up the planet. Now what do you do?’”**
>
> *—Producer Dean Devlin—*

with this disaster."

Devlin credits the Irwin Allen disaster movies of the '70s with providing the feeling of how the alien invasion might be experienced on Earth. If the POSEIDON ADVENTURE gave us a ship turned upside down, then INDEPENDENCE DAY gives us the world turned upside down. A la THE TWILIGHT ZONE, ordinary people are caught up in extraordinary circumstances—not Schwarzenegger-like heroes who fight off the hordes single-handed.

Explaining the difficulty of reviving the disaster format in a science-fiction setting, Devlin said, "I think [the disaster cycle] did burn itself out, because we'd used up all the disasters that people are comfortable with. A science-fiction disaster film inherently has a problem in that what makes a disaster film work is the familiarity. You've been in that situation, and you fear this is the worst-case scenario of the situation you've been in. With science fiction inherently it's a situation you haven't been in. So, I think what makes this film work is that we place it in today's world, with people you can identify with, in situations you can identify with. It's only the enemy you can't identify with. That's original to our daily existence. I think that's one of the reasons why we were able to bring it back. But the other reason why we *wanted* to bring it back was there's been a tendency on the big movies now—especially through the '80s—to go with a superhero-type lead actor, who's bigger than life, tougher than life, pumped up. We wanted to do a movie where there was an ensemble of characters that were like people you knew, that you could relate to and say, 'I know a guy like that.' They're not superheroes. You could be that person in that situation. So this movie offered us that opportunity. I think that people want that again. I think that's why Harrison Ford is such a big star. He's not a comic-book character; he's real. When you see THE FUGITIVE, you think: that could've been me—or my uncle, or someone I knew!"

Story attributes like this are what drew Jeff Goldblum to his role as the piece's brilliant but very human scientist—a pleasing departure for him from his cynical roll in JURASSIC PARK. "My character took a job with a cable company," explained the actor. "I simplified my life, even though I had a great deal of potential. When this all happens, it's me who uncovers their way of communic1ating with each other, when they're first up there, through this embedded code in our satellite system. I intuit, in fact, that it's a countdown signal reducing itself every time it cycles until the moment it disappears. I intuit that they're going to attack. I then rush—heroically and romantically—to my former wife, who I'm still very much in love with, and get her out of Washington."

But can the aliens be stopped? The answer may lie in Area 51, the top-secret Air Force base which houses the nearly 50-year-old alien ship from the Roswell incident. In real life, the truth was never widely known of what had happened at Roswell. Is there a secret base that houses the remains of a ship from the 1948 Roswell, New Mexico incident—purported by many to be the crash of a UFO on a rancher's land? The Air Force denies it, but the truth is in dispute.

"I happen to have a mother who's a fanatic about UFOs," Devline explained from the Area 51 set. "So my whole life I've always been inundated with information about the Roswell incident and Area 51 and things like that; I've actually been brought up around it. I didn't do much additional research than I've already known. We looked into some things just to check out the logistics of it. But we wanted to put together a movie that taps into all the pre-existing mythology about UFOs and then extend it one step further."

In INDEPENDENCE DAY, the truth is truly out there, in the form of an intact ship held at Area 51. Part of the same alien race's force which might've been lost on a reconnaissance mission, the ship may contain the means by which the aliens will be repelled. Otherwise, we're history. □

Jeff Goldblum, last seen in HIDEAWAY (below), plays an everyman scientist in INDENDENCE DAY.

CRYI

The "Manchurian

Low-budget horror producer Brian Yuzna prefers not to compare his projects to other films—an understandable quirk considering his reputation as a trendsetter (1985's REANIMATOR was a blend of outrageous splatter and humor, something copycats have tried to duplicate with considerably less panache).

But the fact is that from Hollywood's point of view, the affable producer remains a fringe player (his co-producing credit on HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS notwithstanding), a doyen of the independent playing field where *Famous Monsters of Filmland* graduates crank out generic direct-to-video fare. Therefore, any genre film which becomes a mainstream splash is worth being compared to, especially when it could mean the difference between obscurity and a theatrical release.

When Yuzna and a diverse group of producers, actors, and technicians invaded Vancouver during the end of 1994 to film CRYING FREEMAN, THE CROW had completed a successful domestic run, was upping its total gross past $100 million overseas, and enjoying top-10 status in video rental stores. Few had anticipated the dark tale of a vengeful rock star risen from the dead would draw an audience, but nobody was more pleased than Yuzna.

"I'm reluctant to compare FREEMAN to THE CROW because the stories are so different, but both are foreboding tales; both are based on comic books; and both feature mystic anti-heroes," he said. "Certainly, THE CROW's success bol-

Above: Mark Dacascos stars as Freeman, a pottery artist brainwashed into becoming a deadly assassin. Below Left: Julie Douglas stars opposite Dacascos as Freeman's would-be victim and lover. Below Right: The action-packed content of the Japanese comic book offered lots of opportunity for cinematic splendor.

NG FREEMAN

Candidate" of Manga goes live-action.

sters our chances of finding a studio to release our movie."

CRYING FREEMAN is a highly-stylized action-fantasy based on the Japanese graphic novel by Kazuo Koike and Ryoichi Ikegami. Freeman (played by martial arts champion Mark Dacascos) is a pottery artist kidnapped against his will and brainwashed into becoming a deadly assassin. Each time he kills on command, he is touched with a fleeting moment of regret and sheds tears for his victim.

The pivotal point of Freeman's adventures comes when he falls in love with a would-be victim, played by Julie Douglas (TV's WEIRD SCIENCE and STARMAN), and runs afoul of the grand masters who control his destiny. The ensuing treachery, suspense, and Yakusa-style violence plays out in San Francisco, Vancouver and China.

In Japan, the comic's popularity rivals AKIRA, which took North America by storm when the animated feature was released in 1989. But in the U.S. FREEMAN remains an obscure cult item, making Yuzna's faith in it all the more notable.

For the past five years, the producer has worked with Japanese film companies to turn comic book properties into international co-productions. FREEMAN struck him as the worthiest contender not only because of its bizarre storyline but because "it is cinematically drawn, and the images leaped from the page. It cried out for adaptation."

Bringing FREEMAN to life was more difficult than anticipated, however. Yuzna contacted Paris-based producer Samuel Hadida , who had worked with Yuzna on H.P. LOVECRAFT'S NECRONOMICON). A fan of the comic, Hadida lost no time setting the production gears in motion. Aiming for a $15-million budget, the pair liaisoned with Taka Ichise, president of Ozla Pictures in Tokyo and another NECRONOMICON alumni.

Complications set in early on in the three-way negotiations, and were partly due to what Yuzna calls the "nerve-wracking" nature of independent financing. But they also stemmed from the fact he and Hadida were required to follow tedious business protocol dictated by Asian interests. "Put it this way: they have a rigid modus operandi, and it takes a long time to reach basic agreements," Yuzna said.

By Robin Brunet

Further, Hadida was keen on hiring 34-year-old NECRONOMICON director Christophe Gans to helm Freeman, an idea Ichise found hard to swallow—until he heard reports of the Parisian filmmaker's efficiency on the H.P. Lovecraft shoot. "Christophe is a genre fan and very knowledgeable about Asian action cinema, which FREEMAN is most closely aligned to," Yuzna remarked.

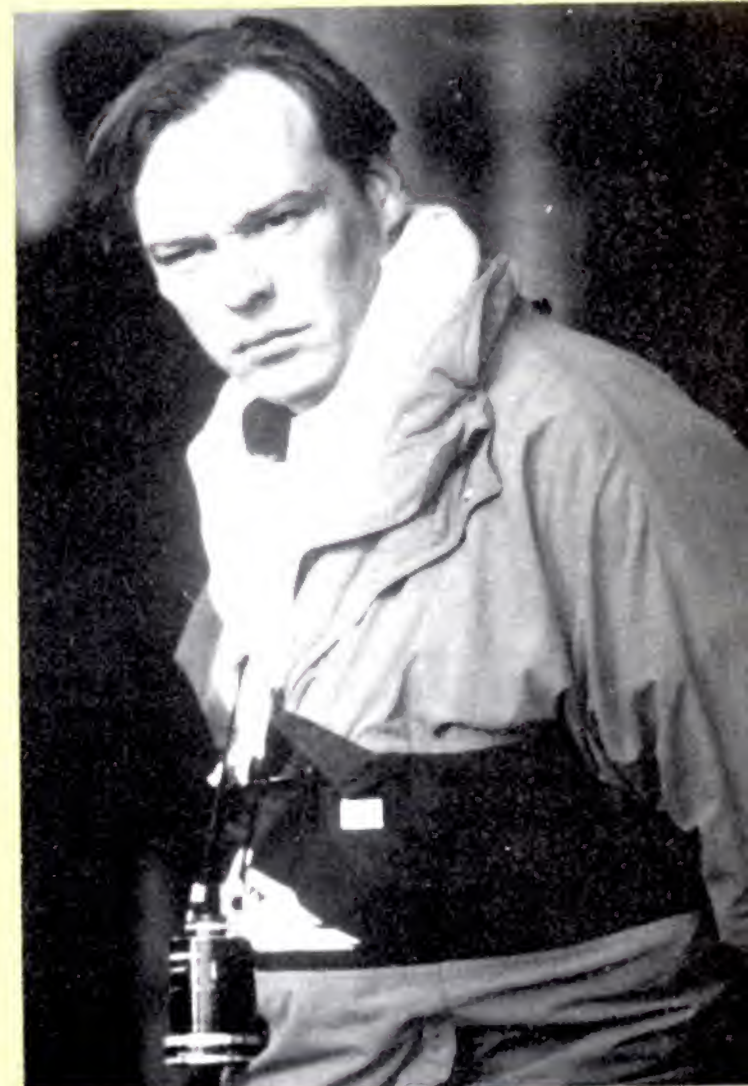
Once the money-lenders were found, a shooting schedule was established. But as Hadida explored ways to make FREEMAN bigger, Ichise and his colleagues, who regarded the project as a modest undertaking, vetoed cost increases.

Hadida then decided to film in Vancouver to get the biggest bang for his buck: the Canadian city is renowned for its diverse locations, experienced crews, and devalued dollar. "We checked the place, but it turned out not to be the least bit cheap," Yuzna recalled. "Even L.A. was cheaper.

"However, Vancouver had all the locations we required within easy driving distance, so we eventually gave the green-light and hired the cast and a local crew."

The FREEMAN team settled in for a July shoot, but yet another hurdle appeared when the producers were told the budget had not yet been fully secured. Hadida and Yuzna reluctantly laid off the crew, but the bad news wasn't over yet. When the budget eventually came through (now at a meagre $9 million), "We had to reconceive the entire movie, including the shooting schedule, which dropped from a comfortable 55 days to an extremely tight 35 days," said Yuzna. "The thing was: we couldn't get studio backing for the movie, so in the end we decided to wing it rather than fold our tents altogether."

Interiors were quickly built in an abandoned warehouse, but once FREEMAN cameras rolled, its chance of becoming a big-screen epic was further compromised by the Vancouver crew's work pace. "I would call their initial performance somewhat staid, a result of dealing with studios and networks with deep pockets," Yuzna said. "They didn't think we could pull FREEMAN off. In all fairness, they turned around once they realized we were serious, and they proved to be our saving grace."



Christophe Gans, director of FREEMAN, made an impressive debut with the middle episode of the Brian Yuzna-produced trilogy NECRONOMICON.

The crew—members of which have earned their stripes on countless shoots both big and small—preferred not to comment on the matter. Special effects man Gary Paller would say only that time and money "were at a premium" while rolling his eyes heavenwards.

Paller and his five-man team, whose last genre outing was the Vancouver-lensed NEEDFUL THINGS, were assigned to stage a major Yakuza shootout in downtown Vancouver and a climactic battle involving various major explosions.

"For the shootout we detonated a

150' fireball in the middle of the city with the actors standing 20 feet away," the bear-like effects master says, adding that his long-standing rapport with city officials enabled him to obtain the proper permits for the complicated spectacle on short notice. "We used gas and kerosene for a red and black apocalyptic look, put an 18mm lens camera on a nearby roof, another inside a car that blows, and another beside the source of the explosion. The entire shootout was pulled off in only two days, and turned out to be quite a civic event."

"Our picture has fantastic stunts and a tremendous pace —which should attract attention. And if not, what the hell; being independent is a gamble."

The climax unfolds in a Yakuza temple production designer Alex McDowell (THE CROW) reputedly built in the woods outside Vancouver for under $100,000. The set boasted a 100 yard-long avenue lined with life-sized sculptures and augmented by a giant Buddha on a raised dais. Paller rigged bullet hits for 50 fighting extras, 30 explosions, and the grisly demise of a Yakuza strongman.

"It was the only graphic death in the entire film, and occurs when Freeman sticks a hand grenade in another guy's belt," said make-up artist Chris Nelson. "We spent two weeks constructing a latex dummy filled with foam guts and blood, and Paller rigged the arms and legs to blow off. It's a *frisson* that will hopefully shock audiences."

CRYING FREEMAN star Dacascos, a 30-year-old Hawaiian martial arts champion, has previously appeared in DOUBLE DRAGON.

Nelson, whose last assignment was the Stella Stevens shocker THE GRANNY, was also responsible for creating the film's only full-blown fantasy sequence, in which Freeman hallucinates that one of the temple's statues comes to life and bites him on the shoulder.

Originally Nelson and his staff wanted the statue to be animatronic, but budget restrictions forced them to come up with a simpler alternative. "We made an actor to look like the statue already fabricated by the construction people by painting him copper and giving him pointy false teeth," he says. "Fortunately we found someone who was the spitting image of the statue—so much so that working on him was unnerving."

With a practically non-existent prosthetics budget, Nelson turned a local Chinese opera singer into an elderly mystic who oversees Freeman's transformation into an assassin. "We sculpted a forehead, eye bags, and a neck piece to give her a cobra-like appearance. Once the producers saw her in the dailies, they gave us more money for prosthetics—hence the exploding dummy," he says.

Given the large number of extras engaged in combat throughout the shoot, costume designer Toni Rutter found herself constantly altering 100 suits "for specific falls, jumps, stunts." Rutter's main challenge was pleasing FREEMAN's Asian backers, who insisted the Oriental costumes—such as casual-wear and funeral kimonos—be made in the traditional manner, i.e., by hand.

Rutter singles out director Gans for creating FREEMAN's distinctive look. "He created a monochromatic BARTON FINK effect by matching the color of the sets with the color of the costumes," she says. "If we had an Italian restaurant with red furniture, I dressed the waitresses in red velvet and the waiters in burgundy vests. It was an affordable way of giving the story an other-worldly feel."

For the record, Gans compares FREEMAN to early James Bond movies, and says he tried to pull all the elements of Asian action cinema, 1940s women's dramas, and gangster films together into a cohesive whole. "It's a romantic vision of the Asian crime world. People are either very elegant or very deadly. And this is a movie about chivalry, about knights and damsels, but in modern suits and with guns."

Rutter also has high praise for star Dacascos, a 30-year-old Hawaiian martial arts champion who was spotted at age 18 by Wayne Wang in San Francisco's Chinatown and given a bit part in that director's DIM SUM. He has guest-starred in TALES FROM THE CRYPT and THE FLASH, and he made his feature debut in the movie version of DOUBLE DRAGON, but his showiest credit is from an unusual venue: playing Conan in the live-action show on the Universal Studios tour.

"He gained the respect of the crew early on when he had to stand near-naked in a freezing warehouse for fourteen hours while grips threw buckets of water at him," the costume designer says. "He never complained, or at any other moment during the shoot, even though he dropped about eight pounds with the exertion and long hours."

For his part, Dacascos admits the toughest part of playing Freeman was conjuring the trademark tears the character sheds after killing. "When it's 12 hours down, you get the emotion going and you use the glycerin or whatever it takes to get the shot," he told the local press.

Shooting wrapped in mid-December 1994 on-budget and only several days over schedule. Paller echoed the sentiments of his Vancouver colleagues when he said, "It was a pain in the ass to make ends meet, but the final result is impressive. FREEMAN looks big-budget, and it has character and body."

Although the film has no U.S. distributor yet, it did receive an enthusiastic review and a prediction of strong domestic boxoffice potential from *Daily Variety* when it screened at the Toronto Film Festival in October. Yuzna, who committed to his feeling that FREEMAN was worthy of theatrical release by shooting in widescreen, agrees: "I suppose it's a big risk, considering I'm used to $3 million budgets and the direct-to-video market," the producer grins at the thought of his predicament. "But we've got a picture that overdoes everything, has fantastic stunts, and a tremendous pace—factors that should attract attention. And if not, then what the hell; working in the independent field is a gamble. I'll take my lumps." □

H. P. LOVECRAFT'S NECRONOMICON IN LIMBO

Two years later, still no distributor.

Christophe Gans' atmospheric episode "The Drowned," with Richard Lynch, (above) is by far the highlight of H.P. LOVECRAFT'S NECRONOMICON.

By Steve Biodrowski

Over two years after it was first covered in *Imagi-Movies* (1:2), H.P. LOVECRAFT'S NECRONOMICON, the previous collaboration between Cristophe Gans and Brian Yuzna, remains in distribution limbo as far as U.S. audiences are concerned, although it has shown up on bootleg videos copied from Japanese laserdiscs (with subtitles, of course). The film's chances of landing a domestic distributor were hardly helped by an overall negative review in *Daily Variety*.

Still, viewers lucky enough to have seen the film mostly agree that the three-part anthology (plus wraparound) has one saving grace: the middle episode, written and directed by Cristophe Gans. Not that it's a mini-masterpiece, but it is the kind of assured filmmaking that promises fresh talent guaranteed to bloom with bigger and better projects.

Whereas the rest of the film is a bit too eager to aim for shocks (of the "surprise" twist and prosthetic gore variety), Gans goes for atmosphere, taking an interesting concept and working it out to its logical if horrific conclusion, without ever stooping to gratuitous effects. Of all the filmmakers, he is the one who came closest to living up to the film's premise, which was not to adapt specific Lovecraft stories but to create new stories within the Lovecraft Universe.

"My story is an original," he said. "Lovecraft was very talented; his style is so powerful that you can read a short story and, although it's really nothing, it seems great. If you read "The Rats in the Walls," there's really nothing interesting, cinematically speaking." ("Rats" was the original inspiration for Gans' episode, during early stages of development, when there was still thought of adapting specific stories; only the surname of the lead characters survives the cinematic translation.)

"My interest in Lovecraft is the mythology, which is not Christian," Gans explained. "There is no Hell, no Heaven; there is no idea of sin. There is only the idea that there is something beyond dreams, beyond reality. I like that. My own explanation for his success to date is that he anticipated many things like the post-acid culture and New Age culture—cultures about dreams and the other side of reality. In France [Gans' native country], he's huge; he's published in the same collections as Victor Hugo and Balzac. We like that strange mixture of poetry, vision, and horror."

Gans managed to capture a little of that mixture in his episode, creating a doomed love story about a bereaved man (Bruce Payne) who follows in the footsteps of his Uncle (Richard Lynch) in that both attempt to resurrect their dead wives, using a spell from the *Necronomicon*. "In a very Poetic—that is, Edgar Allan Poe—way, it is openly sexual," said Gans of his approach.

Technically, this film was not the first collaboration between Yuzna and Gans. The former film critic had previously scripted CRYING FREEMAN, which took longer to finance because it is a much more expensive project. On the basis of that, Yuzna selected him to write and direct one episode of NECRONOMICON, which in turn led to his receiving the directing assignment on FREEMAN.

The rest of NECRONOMICON (scripted by Brent Friedman, of THE RESURRECTED) is watchable, though not particularly inspired. "The Cold" is a relatively close adaptation of Lovecraft's "Cool Air," directed by Shu Kaneko (who went on to much better work in GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE [see page 38]). The Yuzna-directed final episode, "Whispers," tries a bit too hard to stand in for a climactic third act, with much action and effects, but little development.

Still, the episode is conceptually interesting, in terms of trying to present a horror that is truly Lovecraftian in nature. As Yuzna explained: "Originally, I was trying to do an adaptation of 'The Whisperer in the Dark,' and it just didn't work. In doing that, I had to go through a lot of thought processes. One of them was: the fear I was trying to focus on is that feeling I think we've all had, which you first get when you realize that you're finite and the world outside is infinite—you realize your life is short. The feeling I was trying to get—and this is very Lovecraftian—was that all our culture, all our religion, all our philosophies—Heaven, Hell, Good, Bad—all those things that we have created are nothing more than a shadowplay that we make up to entertain ourselves within a great, cruel, uninterested, and impersonal universe. If you really put yourself in that frame of mind, it's a terrifying experience. That was what I was trying to dramatize."

Actually, the film's other highlight, besides Gans' "The Drowned," is the wraparound sequences, featuring Jeffrey Combs (REANIMATOR) as Lovecraft himself, absconding with the dreaded *Necronomicon* from a strange library where it is apparently guarded by one of the Great Old Ones. Combs delivers a fine (if somewhat fictionalized) personification of the Rhode Island author, and the mostly silent sequences do establish a nice unifying atmosphere for the film and provide a more satisfying climactic finish than "Whispers."

However, these scenes also provide one nagging problem: Each intervening episode is presented as if it is being read by Lovecraft from the ancient volume, yet the stories are all set in the 20th century. Maybe what we are seeing is not literally what Lovecraft is reading but stories which he will later write based on his discoveries. But even this explanation begs the question of Yuzna's episode, which is clearly set in the 1990s. Since Lovecraft died in 1937, we can only assume that he was a prophetic author indeed. □

The Disney King?

Rival animators attempt to stake out a piece of the feature territory.

By Mike Lyons

"Hakuna Matata"—that "problem free philosophy" from Disney's boxoffice bonanza, THE LION KING—is an attitude that much of their competition would love to adopt. There are approximately fourteen animation studios currently outside the Disney realm, all of which have projects in the works. With the unparalleled success Disney has had in this field, however, these "non-Disney" studios have a challenge ahead of them akin to using a plastic spoon to scale Mount Everest.

Richard Rich, who produced and directed last year's THE SWAN PRINCESS, is one of many animators dedicated to proving that Disney need not be the only company turning out quality animation features.

Richard Rich, a former Disney animator, who now runs his own studio, Rich Animation, says that the challenge is not as gargantuan as many are predicting. "We're not so much competing with Disney, as we are competing with audience expectation," he said, adding, "My background is at Disney, and we felt that there are lots of talented artists out there that don't necessarily want to work at Disney, but want to work on quality products, and we've found those artists and have been able to put together a staff that does that." Rich does concede one advantage to Disney, however: "The difficulty comes for us in the marketing, where they can expend huge amounts of money to put the product before the public."

This has not stopped Rich from forging ahead with quality animation. After fourteen years working on such Disney projects as THE RESCUERS and THE FOX AND THE HOUND, Rich founded his animation studio in 1986. Last year, New Line released THE SWAN PRINCESS, which Rich directed and co-wrote. Based on SWAN LAKE, the film's story of a beautiful princess who is turned into a swan was a natural for animation and took full advantage of its voice talents: Jack Palance, John Cleese and comedian Steven Wright. Like many of its peers, Rich Animation Studios is currently at work on another animated feature, FEATHERTOP. Based on a Nathaniel Hawthorne short story, the film will tell the PINOCCHIO-like tale of a scarecrow who earns the right to be human.

"I think it's wrong for one studio to have a monopoly on animation," said Rich. "I think as more and more studios get into the marketplace and the public learns that it's not only Disney that can do it, it will make it easier for all of us to compete in that marketplace. It will take a little bit of time to break down that barrier that 'only Disney can do it.' That's what I was up against for years." Rich also adds that the abundance of studios won't overwhelm the public's insatiable need for animation. "I don't think you can over-saturate animation," he says. "If it's a good movie, people will go to see it, and it won't matter if it's animated or live-action."

Another former Disney employee also recognized this philosophy and used it to spearhead the studio's animation resurgence. As Chairman of Walt Disney Pictures, Jeffrey Katzenberg came to Disney with no knowledge of animation and, in his ten year residence, nurtured the dying art form back into the hallmark that it had once been. For years, the secret of the Disney animated feature was a lot like the formula for Coca-Cola: only a chosen few really knew what it was, and everyone else wanted it. Now, Katzenberg has taken that "formula" over to his own studio, Dream Works, which he formed with David Geffen and Steven Spielberg, after leaving Disney late last year.

One of Dream Works' top priorities is going to be animation. In fact, their first feature is already slated for a 1998 release: a "remake" of THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, entitled THE PRINCE OF EGYPT. In addition to this, Spielberg's animation studio, Amblimation (one of Disney's prime competitors in recent years, whose films included AN AMERICAN TAIL: FEIVEL GOES WEST and WE'RE BACK!) will "fold into" the new Dream Works studio. Amblimation already has several projects in production, including an adaptation of the Broadway musical, CATS.

Felines are also the subject of another studio's animation project. Turner Feature Animation (TFA) is currently at work on CATS DON'T DANCE, an animated tribute to Hollywood's golden era of movie musicals that's due out in theatres in 1997. The film is a joint venture with David Kirschner productions (THE PAGEMASTER) and has attracted some top talent, including the voices of Scott Bakula, Natalie Cole and Kathy Najimy and a musical score by Randy Newman. The film's art director

Turner Feature Animation throws its hat into the ring later this year with CATS DON'T DANCE, featuring the vocal talents of Scott Bakula, Natalie Cole, and Kathy Najimy, with a musical score by Randy Newman.

Brian McEntee (who served the same role on Disney's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST), says, "Thematically, CATS DON'T DANCE is about achieving your dreams and achieving them against impossible odds," said McEntee. "In some ways it's similar to Turner Feature Animation trying to compete in feature animation. Everyone says, 'Well, Disney's the only one who can compete,' but I think we have a shot and we're going after our dreams."

The look of CATS DON'T DANCE is a completely new, stylized one. "Since we're doing an interpretation of Hollywood in the golden age of musicals, we explored the art deco style as our springboard. What I liked about deco is that it's formal and elegant and clean, but at the same time is kind of dynamic, which relates really well to the tone of the story." McEntee also added that this is a "whole new world," as compared to what Disney is attempting: "With Disney, they've pushed animation in a particular direction that I think is really successful for them, but there are other directions that you can go. At TFA, we're trying to do that; we're trying to go in a different direction that I think for Disney might be problematic because they've mined really deeply into a narrow vein and they've mined it well. But, there are a lot of other places to go."

McEntee also said that this unique look helps bring something new to animation. "What I'm hoping with CATS DON'T DANCE is that we get more of the artistic side back into it—more of the interpretation and caricature that I think is really the strength of animation. It's what makes animation unique from live-action. If you made the ultimate animated film that looks realistic, then what's the point?"

John Canemaker, a noted animation historian, teacher, and author of four books on the subject, says that this way of thinking should be adapted by all of Disney's competitors. "It seems easy to try and emulate Disney, but in reality it isn't," said Canemaker. "There's a tradition behind Disney that is not behind the other studios; they're all starting up. I think the best thing for the other studios would be to start fresh and do interesting productions in interesting and differing 'non-Disney' styles." He also added, "They've got to find something that is uniquely their own. When you hear Warners, it will be uniquely a Warner Brothers feature, or if you hear MGM or Twentieth Century Fox it will mean something. Because, when you say 'Disney,' there's the image, and the other studios don't have that yet."

They may not have the image yet, but that's not keeping other studios from trying. In addition to FEATHERTOP, PRINCE OF EGYPT, and CATS DON'T DANCE, audiences can look forward to a slew of other "non-Disney" animation. Miramax Films has signed a multi-picture deal with Henry Selick, director of Disney's THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS and JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH. Last year, Miramax released Richard Williams' long-awaited THE THIEF AND THE COBBLER, retitled ARABIAN KNIGHT. The film, which contains stunning craftsmanship and features the voices of the late Vincent Price and Donald Pleasence, was a true labor of love: Williams, who directed the animation sequences in WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT, had worked on it for 20 years.

Another labor of love is THE FROG PRINCE, the first full-length "clay-mation" feature from the "creator" of the stop-motion clay process and the California Raisins, Will Vinton. Another familiar story, THE ADVENTURES OF PETER RABBIT, is currently in production at Santa Monica Pictures. Such proven characters are not found only in fairy tales: Hanna-Barbera is currently at work on a full-length feature of their cult cartoon, SPACE GHOST, and Arrow Films is readying GUMBY: THE MOVIE, which will no doubt induce a different type of flashback to the '60s.

Some familiar names in the field of animation also are poised for comebacks. At Warner Bros., legendary animator Chuck Jones has come back to the studio to direct a new series of short subjects, some of which will utilize the classic Looney Tunes canon. (The first of these, a brand new Road Runner short, CHARIOTS OF FUR, premiered last year with the live-action film RICHIE RICH.) Working with a "new breed" of animators, Jones also plans a sequel to one of his most famous short subjects, 1956's ONE FROGGY EVENING, to be aptly entitled ANOTHER FROGGY EVENING.

Another familiar animation name, Don Bluth (THE LAND BEFORE TIME), recently joined 20th Century Fox. He and partner Gary Goldman, who together led a "walk-out" of Disney animators in 1979, are now part of Fox Animation, a brand new studio located in Phoenix, Arizona. Their first production started this summer: ANASTASIA, featuring the voice of Meg Ryan.

What does all of this mean for the future of "non-Disney" animation? "I say that it's very bright," said Richard Rich. "I think what helps us are family values and the drive to come back to all of that. The reason that I'm in animation is because I have six kids, and I don't want to have to make films that my kids can't see, and in animation, no one expects that. There's no swearing, and there doesn't have to be any of that. It can be very idealistic, uplifting—high morals, high achievement. That's what animation does, it caricatures real life:

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Similar to the challenges facing new animation studios competing with Disney, CATS DON'T DANCE is about achieving your dreams against impossible odds.

TWELVE MONKEYS

Terry Gilliam's new film again treads the line between fact & fantasy.

by Andrew Markowitz

"World Leaders Meet in Cairo as Virus Spreads," announces the *Irish Times*. "900,000,000 Dead: The World Grieves," mourns *Time*. *Newsweek* simply sighs: "The End of the World is Nigh."

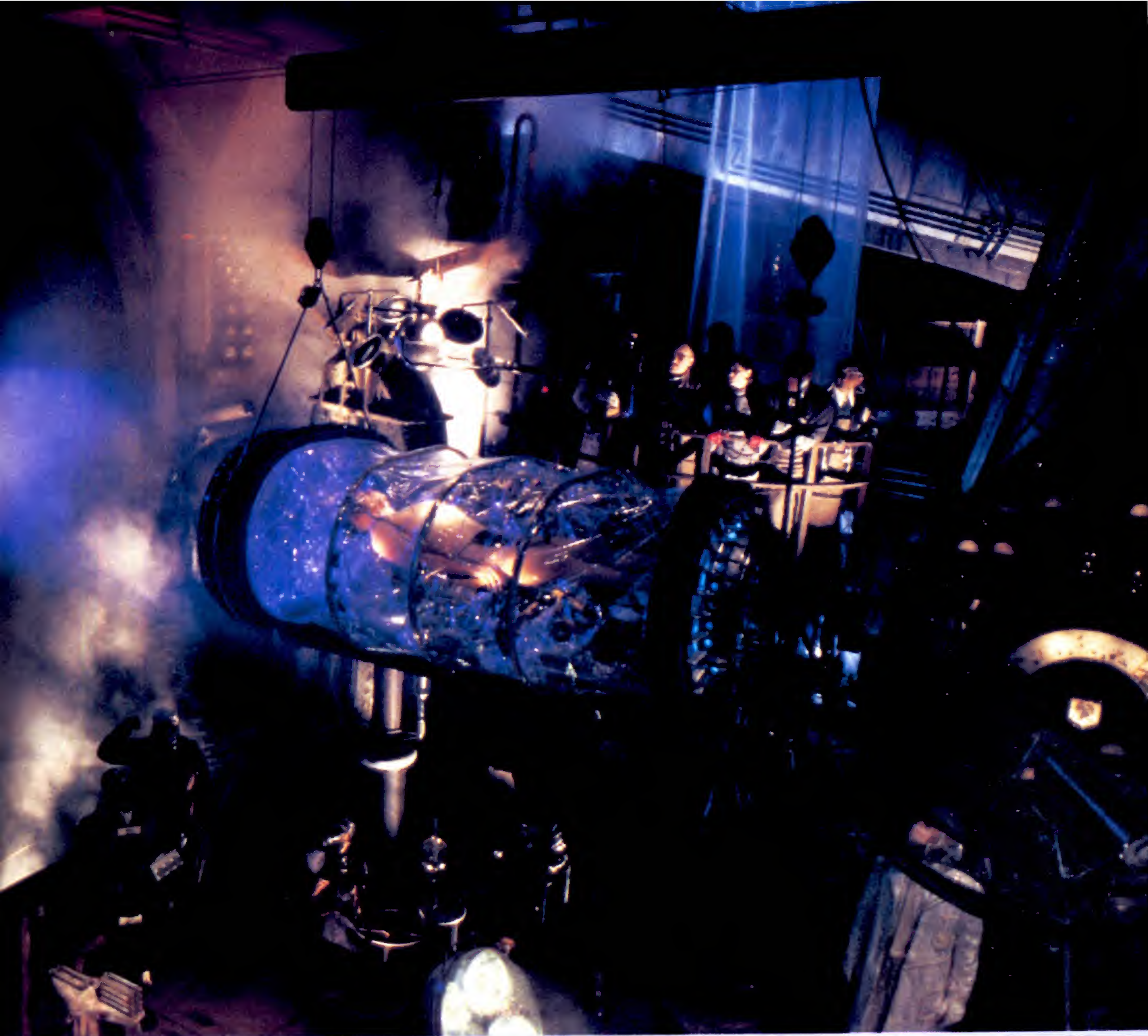
These screaming headlines and news clippings creep up a 22-foot wall, telling their tale vertically: how a mysterious virus was loosed on the world in 1996, killing virtually everyone in its path and rendering the Earth's surface an uninhabitable wasteland. Forty years later, the surviving one percent of humankind subsists in a grim subterranean netherworld called Eternal Night. In one corner of this twilight existence, beneath the remains of Philadelphia, the wall of yellowed clippings stands as a record of the holocaust, preserved by a group of scientists plotting to reclaim the surface and avert extinction.

In reality, this story begins in 1962, when French documentarian Chris Marker made his lone fiction film, LA JETEE, a 29-minute essay about the end of the world that Pauline Kael called the greatest science-fiction film she'd ever seen. Comprised almost entirely of still photographs and narration, LA JETEE tells the story of a time traveler sent into the past by a band of post-nuclear survivors trying to keep the human race alive. The film, though not widely seen, became a staple of film schools and a favorite of film students—like Robert Kosberg, who saw Marker's movie at UCLA and spent years cultivating a relationship with the now 74-year-old filmmaker in an effort to secure the rights for a feature-length adaptation.

The fruit of that effort is 12 MONKEYS, which transplants Marker's story from post-nuclear France to 21st-century America. (Kosberg is the film's co-executive producer.) What makes 12 MONKEYS so interesting to fans of filmic fantasy, however, is not merely the shadow of Chris Marker but the very real presence of Terry Gilliam, returning to the science-fiction arena that gives freest rein to his vivid visual imagination.

The premise of 12 MONKEYS is essentially the same as that outlined by LA JETEE's narrator: "The human race was doomed. It was cut off from space. Its only hope for survival was time...emissaries in time to summon the past and the future to the aid of the present. One man was chosen for his obsession with an image from the past, but he is never sure whether he invents or

Below: On location, Terry Gilliam kneels next to the fake snow utilized when the weather turned clear. Right: Cole (Bruce Willis) is placed in the time machine.



dreams."

The "one man" in 12 MONKEYS is Cole (Bruce Willis), a criminal doing life in one of Eternal Night's jails until the Philadelphia scientists send him back to 1996 to unravel the mystery of the virus, called CZT. Why select a convict to save the world? Because, like the protagonist of LA JETEE, Cole is obsessed with a haunting, violent dream from his youth—which may be a memory that will yield clues about the holocaust that ravaged humanity. In 1996, Cole's prophecies of destruction are initially dismissed as the ravings of a lunatic; he is committed to a mental institution, where he meets Jeffrey Goines (Brad Pitt), a member of a mysterious animal-rights group, the Army of the 12 Monkeys, which may or may not have been instrumental in unwittingly unleashing the virus. Meanwhile, the psychiatrist who had Cole committed, Dr. Railly (Madeleine Stowe), begins to believe him.

The film "deals with madness and prophecy and deja vu...the viewer sees the world from the point of view of someone who may be mad, then makes the decision to join him in his delusion," according to David Webb Peoples (BLADE RUNNER), who wrote the script with his wife Janet.

Time travel in LA JETEE is accomplished through drugs, which return the protagonist to the time of a particularly powerful memory. 12 MONKEYS opts for a more technological approach but maintains the use of memory. "You're not clear that he ever really went anywhere in LA JETEE," said Peoples. It's very different in 12 MONKEYS, because in LA JETEE there's a suggestion that the whole process is cerebral, and there isn't a physicality to it. Our picture is physical, as opposed to mental, but it is subjective. So we have produced an ambiguity about the reliability of some different characters in terms of interpreting their own experiences—we hope!"

"Dreams are perhaps more important in LA JETEE. Although the *Dream* is very important in 12 MONKEYS, it's not essentially about dreams," added Janet Peoples. "We really think it was a huge blessing for us to have Terry Gilliam as the director. No matter what we wrote, Terry Gilliam said, 'I can make this mine; I can do this.' And he took it to a place that was not on the page necessarily;

From the underground world of Eternal Night, Cole moves through a tunnel on his way to exploring the decimated world above ground.

he did take it to the next stage."

12 MONKEYS finds Gilliam working on familiar turf both thematically and visually. Cole is the latest Gilliam protagonist whose character is intertwined with delusion and/or fantasy: BRAZIL's Sam Lowry, the title character in THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHHAUSEN, Robin Williams' homeless Parry in THE FISHER KING. In all three, the trick for Gilliam and his collaborators was to create worlds consistent with both the settings' external logic (the dystopian bureaucratic nightmare of BRAZIL, for example) and the characters' internal logic.

"It's a really hard thing to design these worlds and make them believable, and also have a sort of magical quality that Terry brings to it," said Jeffrey Beecroft, 12 MONKEYS production designer.

In most of Gilliam's movies, that magical quality seems to spring full-blown from his brain, the indelible images a tail wagging the narrative dog. "The Crimson Permanent Assurance," the hilarious opening sequence he did for the MONTY PYTHON'S THE MEANING OF LIFE, grew from an image he fancied (of buildings sailing across dry land) into a 15-minute short about piratical insurance agents that took as long to make as the rest of the film. (Gilliam, in the book *The First 200 Years of Monty Python*, describes making the short as his lesson that the outrageous images he created in a snap for his brilliant Python animations were more difficult to re-create live.) On a much larger scale, BRAZIL looks as if Gilliam pictured a world and built a story around it. Kim "Howard" Johnson, author of the *200 Years* book, recalls a 1978 interview in which Gilliam recounted his vision for the film. A half-dozen years before Gilliam made BRAZIL—at a time when, judging by the interview, he was still wrestling with aspects of the film's tone and story, even its title—he had mapped out much of it visually, right down to such details as the memorably pulsating innards of Sam Lowry's mechanized apartment: "The room is very barren-looking, but when things start going wrong, the repairmen come and start pulling wall panels off," Gilliam told Johnson. "It looks like guts behind the wall, except it's all mechanical. It's like taking a car apart, and the whole room gets taken over by all the tubes and stuff behind the walls."

The design of the world of Eternal Night was made up mostly of familiar objects, as if scavenged by humans hastily retreating from the deadly surface.

12 MONKEYS on the other hand, began as "a clean slate," said Beecroft. The film's look grew organically from a central conceptual seed: If a small

group of people had to quickly move underground in the face of an apocalypse, bringing with them only as much of the world's sophisticated technology as they could carry on their backs, what kind of existence would they have carved out four decades later?

"We took this kind of urban archaeology look, where if the world was suddenly destroyed by a virus and everyone was dying, what would be there?" recalled Beecroft, who spent several weeks in preproduction with Gilliam, scouting locations and talking out visual ideas. "Terry and I sat down and said, 'What do we take with us underground? How do we make things? What do we eat? How do we get our power sources?'"

For example: "We started talking about recycling air. I said fans, and Terry said, 'No, we have to think of a different way.' Terry started thinking of something that moves in and out; then I started thinking about hydraulics. So everything has some sort of pumping motion—things moving in and out, big breathers."

To make this world believable, the filmmakers had to combine that logic with a sense of randomness, of jumble; the underground environment had to look like it was salvaged from the ashes of a dying world. So the prop and production people scoured junk shops and equipment warehouses. Rather than designing props and building them from sketches and storyboards, the crew looked for objects they thought might seem logical in the world of Eternal Night and built the sets based on their findings. The process turned into "a sort of show and tell," said propmaster Doug Harlocker—the filmmakers didn't exactly know what they wanted, but they knew it when they saw it.

"Our mandate on the movie [was to] take a mix of technology and show it in a new light, or in a recycled or eccentric way," Harlocker said. "We went to aerospace and aeronautics salvage places and any kind of odd technical salvages we could find. We went for the really hi-tech as well as the older, '20s dials and knobs and things. I gathered up materials, shapes, textures, colors, that I needed to move ahead, and I continually showed these things to Terry—'I know it's not what we talked about, but I loved this shape.' For the most part, he was excited about everything."

PUTTING BACKGROUND IN ITS PLACE

"You come away with a sense of these characters," Gilliam said. "The other stuff is there doing its job, but those aren't the images you necessarily come away with."

When Cole arrives in 1996, he meets a psychiatrist (Madeleine Stowe), who comes to believe his story of time traveling to save the future from a virus.

As in BRAZIL, the result is both futuristic and primitive, hi-tech and retro. The "engineers' room"—a set, built in an old Baltimore power plant, in which the scientists keep their archives and interrogate Cole—is full of objects just familiar enough to suggest some kind of identifiable use but odd enough to keep that use a secret.

"We were just trying to make it a technology that had been cobbled together from whatever they'd been able to drag down with them," said Gilliam. "It ended up being found art and collage—whatever we found and we could adapt, we did. It wasn't being designed the way a lot of films are designed, where you draw it up beautifully and build it."

Set dresser Gregory Rocco reaches for similar comparisons in describing his work: "It basically turned into sculpture," Rocco said of a key prop he helped build to carry and insert Cole into the time machine—which Gilliam dubbed the "chrysalis." "We weren't working from drawings. It evolved from conversations."

The chrysalis was developed out of spare parts—gaskets from jet engines, 1930s military and medical gear—that fit the technological look of the time machine itself, which was built into an enormous circular turbine in an abandoned Philadelphia power plant that was one of the film's major sets. Rocco, a sculptor and illustrator when not doing film work, describes the finished product as a claustrophobic contraption with an exterior of ribbed metal and clear plastic, giving it a skeletal appearance.

"Terry's big word was 'disturbing'—'I want this to look disturbing,'" Rocco recalled. That process was followed on everything from major set-pieces like the chrysalis to small details, like a syringe. This latter was an area in which Harlocker came well prepared, having worked on David Cronenberg's DEAD RINGERS and NAKED LUNCH, two films in which needles and scary-looking medical equipment play a major role.

"The script says that [Cole] just pulls out a hi-tech syringe and draws some blood," Harlocker said. "So we said, 'Let's show Terry a variety of syringes.' There's a guy I buy syringes from—believe it or not—in New Mexico. He collects all sorts of old, eccentric medical things. We bought five or six of the most outrageously antiquated ones; then I took another five syringes and pipettes from one of the latest medical and science catalogs, and we laid them out and said to Terry, in terms of size and shape and accessories, 'Where should we go with this? They're all beautiful as individual pieces, but this is an opportunity to sort of meld technology,' and of course this is exactly what he wanted."

They ended up combining a circa-1880 syringe with a small piece of one of the modern devices, so that the blood loops visibly through one tube to another chamber, which is detached for analysis. "It was a lovely thing, and it's a great image," said Harlocker, telling the story of its creation with evident satisfaction. "I always get

caught up in the syringe thing because of NAKED LUNCH and DEAD RINGERS. [Cronenberg] also likes to see technology and weird things used in a different way, and he prefers it created rather than bought off the shelf. Something old, something new—that whole idea. And that's what sci-fi is all about. It's not all beautiful, gleaming metallurgy; it's the eccentricities that accompany it."

12 MONKEYS' off-kilter look had another purpose. It not only had to fit as a logical consequence of life underground after a plague; it also had to function as, possibly, the tortured product of Cole's imagination. One of the film's plot points is whether everything is taking place only in Cole's head. In this way, the production design becomes more than just an eye-stunning but dramatically distracting background; instead, it is a revealing externalization of the protagonist's mental state.

This take on the character has led to the misconception (reported in *CFQ* 27:3) that Cole is a dangerous sociopath; actually, it would be more accurate to say that he is perceived as such by the doctors who commit him in 1996 because of his prophetic warnings about an imminent viral apocalypse. "He's challenging the arbitrary authority, but he's not a sociopath at all," said Janet Peoples. "He's a person who's not adjusted to the ordinary world. He hasn't been compliant; he doesn't fit in. He's a person who doesn't submit, so you can buy into whether he was a person who literally was going on a time travel journey or he's a person who imagines it when he's in a mental institution."

"Some of it has got to be grounded in reality, or what is perceived as reality," Gilliam added. "Other bits I wanted to do were possibly the invention of a demented mind, the character that Bruce played." Gilliam applied this goal to both the futuristic scenes and those supposedly taking place in our present; to preserve the question of Cole's sanity, even some of the latter had to be unsettling. So for the scene in which Cole, in 1996 (or his imagination of it), is committed, Gilliam said, "The mental hospital doesn't really look like a mental hospital. This becomes a subjective approach to a mental hospital, digging beneath the surface of these places." These scenes were shot in Pennsylvania's cavernous, 175-year-old Eastern State Penitentiary, the nation's oldest functioning prison until it closed a few years ago.

"He managed to turn the straight stuff into something eccentric and unusual, like the psychiatric wards," said Harlocker. "Architecturally, it's not just stone cells; it had strange corridors; it had this shape you've never seen before."

A number of old buildings in Philadelphia and Baltimore were used in the film; the Peoples set 12 MONKEYS in the two cities, but only after scouting several places did Gilliam ultimately decide that the two East Coast industrial cities had the right mix of old urban grandeur and modern urban decay. For example, Philadelphia's Ridgeway Library, a glorious old columned building now shuttered and located in a decrepit part of town, was turned into a ghostly 21st-century department store. For the Eternal Night scenes, abandoned power plants in Philadelphia and Baltimore were retrofitted—what Gilliam wistfully calls "these great cathedrals to technology and the future and progress. Now they're history and falling apart and rotting." The plants allowed Gilliam to satisfy his love, apparent since TIME BANDITS, of filming in cavernous spaces. (He filmed much of BRAZIL in old British power plants.)

Again, Gilliam and Beecroft took a generalized idea in the script and adapted it to what they found while looking for places to shoot. "Both Jeff and I had the same reaction," the director said. "The shapes and the textures and the colors are just extraordinary in those places. We were getting these huge sets without having to build them. You just walk, and every time you turn a corner you'd get another idea. I always do that. You go into places [and] develop a dialogue between the place and what the story demands."

To anyone who's seen BRAZIL, it's easy to see why Gilliam was attracted to the Baltimore Gas & Electric's Westport plant, an industrial-age behemoth on the Patapsco River. Built in 1906 and shut down in 1994, the plant is a veritable playpen of huge chambers, pipes, cranks, and turbines. "Part of the idea of the locations was that we could do a lot of construction within these places," Beecroft said. "You could gut the power plants and use all their bits and pieces to build stuff."

Part of the Baltimore plant was turned into the Engineering Room. Here, the scientists keep their archives, endless lengths of musty bookcases and overstuffed shelves. Strewn about the room are the scientists' chairs, again built from found objects and old equipment, an unsettling amalgamation of switches, dials and appendages attached to black metal frames.

The centerpiece of the set is the interrogation chair—a hard metal seat that rises a dozen feet up a wall. Here, Cole is interviewed by the scientists after each return from the past—not in person, but via a huge, suspended metal ball from which an array of mirrors and video screens protrudes. The chair was based on a drawing by

SCI-FI OR PSYCHOLOGY?

"The film deals with madness, prophecy, and deja vu," said Peoples. "The viewer sees the point of view of someone who may be mad, then makes the decision to join him."

Confined as a madman because of his warnings about the future, Cole meets Jeffrey Goines (Brad Pitt), member of the cryptic group, Army of 12 Monkeys.

Christopher Plummer co-stars as a scientist whose research may have led to the deadly virus.

Labias Woods, an "architectural visionary," in Gilliam's words, of whom both the director and Beecroft are fond. "I liked that image, so what I did was stick in all these videos," Gilliam said. "What intrigued me was people being separated from people by all this technology—this strange technology getting in the way of communication. We seem to be getting away from direct communication. I think that's what I was saying."

It wasn't only the power plant that decided Gilliam on shooting in Baltimore. Typically, it was images he saw while scouting locations and, much like the found objects that ended up as crucial props, knew he wanted to use in the film. One was a 142-year-old building owned by the Engineering Society of Baltimore—"this mansion with an incredible staircase," he said. "I kept thinking of some double helix, a DNA molecule. It seemed to be absolutely right for the Cole character in that part of the film—he becomes completely unhinged, not certain what he's done. I was determined to shoot this, so we ended up in Baltimore."

Ironically, a site that cemented the decision to shoot in Baltimore never made it into the film—the modern-art wing of the Baltimore Museum of Art. In a film about a rotting human civilization destroying itself, directed by a Monty Python alumnus who's shown time and again his distaste for soulless modernity, the prospect of shooting in a stark white room full of Andy Warhols was irresistible. (The museum refused permission to use the room; the scene, in which Stowe's character attends a poetry reading, was shot instead at Baltimore's Walters Gallery of Art, amid Renaissance paintings.)

The Warhol room "seemed to be symbolic of the utter foolishness of mankind at the time," Gilliam said, in a voice that makes clear he's grinning. "There was this big version of DaVinci's 'Last Supper,' Xeroxed and painted green, and it's a priceless work of art. I mean, come on!"

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12 MONKEYS

WRITING THE SCRIPT

Janet and David Webb Peoples add a touch of psychology to science fiction.

By Steve Biodrowski

When Robert Kosberg secured the remake rights to Chris Marker's LA JETEE , he took the project to producer Chuck Roven, who had a long-standing relationship with screenwriter David Webb Peoples. David and Janet, his wife and co-writer, were shown a videotape copy of the short and asked whether they could find any inspiration for writing a Hollywood version of the theme.

David Webb Peoples, whose credits include the BLADE RUNNER and the Oscar-winning UNFORGIVEN, scripted 12 MONKEYS with his wife Janet.

"Our first instinct was that it was a magnificent film by itself and we shouldn't be involved in the project," recalled David. "We were very grateful that we'd finally seen it, because we had heard about it for years. But we thought the Hollywood version had been done, inspired directly or otherwise, when Jim Cameron made TERMINATORs 1 and 2, which are magnificent films—though very different, of course [from LA JETEE]."

But the screenwriting team had second thoughts about the potential, not for a remake but for a variation on the theme: "We started thinking about something that would somehow capture some of the haunting stuff in that picture that was so wonderful and that would at the same time be an entertaining film, but different," said David.

"The only thing we could think of doing was something that was really a non-special effects, psychological piece," added Janet. "We never felt we were remaking LA JETEE. Actually, we had free reign to come up with a story that was satisfying to ourselves. In terms of sticking to the story, we only used some of the main conceits of LA JETEE, mostly because we were inspired by Chris and hoped that we could do something that would be pleasing to a larger audience, perhaps."

After delivering their first draft, the Peoples did two sets of revisions before Terry Gilliam came on board as director. "One of the things that made me happy was that Terry read our original draft," said Janet. "In terms of revisions, mostly people had wanted us to keep shortening it, because it's a very long, very dense script. Then Terry kept saying, 'Whatever happened to...' and 'I really liked...' In essence, we ended up trying to put back some of the stuff that had been taken out."

Mounting the film was hindered slightly by its esoteric pedigree, which (according to Terry Gilliam in *CFQ* 27:4-5) frightened distributor Universal into perceiving 12 MONKEYS as an art film. Universal's solution to their perceived problem was to insist on the casting of familiar star faces in the leads; fortunately, the writers were kept buffered from this side of the process, and their script was not tailored to the specifics of Hollywood casting. "I would say there is probably a very significant business story here, but that was never put on us," said Janet. "No one ever said we couldn't do anything because of the business requirements of doing a Hollywood film. So I have to tell you that Universal has been very good to us; the executives we worked with have been completely supportive from the very beginning. The studio obviously would want people in the picture that would attract an audience—that just goes with-

Bruce Willis as Cole in 12 MONKEYS —time traveler or madman?

ADAPTING 'LA JETEE'

"We only used some of the main conceits," said Janet Peoples. "We had free reign to come up with a story that would be a non-special effects, psychological piece."

Madeleine Stowe as the psychiatrist who makes the leap of faith in Cole.

out saying."

Although 12 MONKEYS takes a more technological approach to time travel than LA JETEE, doubts about the character's subjective experience remain. The short film utilized drugs and memories, leaving open to interpretation the question of whether its protagonist actually did return to the past. The hallucinagenic approach is reminiscent of Philip K. Dick's novel *Now Wait For Last Year*, and author's other works similarly dealt with characters uncertain whether what they were experiencing was real or illusion. Of course, David People's first genre screen credit was for co-writing BLADE RUNNER, adapted from Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. However, despite the apparent thematic similarities, Peoples denies any direct influence on 12 MONKEYS.

"In fact, we're not science-fiction or Philip K. Dick readers," he stated. "On the other hand, you can't say you're not influenced by someone like that, because Philip K. Dick—like Harlan Ellison, Heinlein and others—has so influenced our culture and everything around us that perhaps we were, but certainly not directly. If we are, we don't know it. It's something that's in the air that people are thinking about—like a picture that's a favorite of mine, JACOB'S LADDER, which I think is brilliant."

"David and I have read science fiction at different times in our life, but we've had other experiences," added Janet, "and many of our experiences were maybe similar to ones Philip K. Dick had. He lived in Berkeley; we live in Berkeley. We have some things in common. David and I both have the experiences of working in mental institutions, state hospitals, when we were college-aged. That line between madness and sanity is very, very thin."

After writing several scripts on his own, what is it like collaborating with his wife? "It's almost indescribable; it's like describing how butter melts!" David laughed. "We just go back and forth with a lot of *Sturm und Drang*, and we like what came out. Somewhere in there, there's one sentence that maybe I could identify that I wrote, and there's one sentence that maybe Jan could identify that she wrote; but the whole thing's been so worked over by both of us that 'collaborative' is an understatement."

"If you're writing together," added Janet, "and you have a partnership that extends to your home life, too, that synthesis is when both throw in the towel and say, 'The war is over.' You no longer know which was yours and which was the other person's. The butter's melted then."

After completing their revisions for Gilliam during the rehearsals, the Peoples stepped back from the production, although they were asked to be involved. "We were invited to stay but felt the writers' work was done," explained Janet. "We made ourselves available and were sent the dailies. The writers probably would have some vested interest, even if they didn't know it. We tried to let everyone do their work."

David added, "We're hugely respectful of the people involved. You just want to stay out of the way, unless they call and say they need a line written, in which case we oblige. We couldn't have been luckier in having a director like that and having that cast. The proof is in the pudding: we would love to have [Gilliam] direct anything we wrote."

Although David Peoples greatest success has come with the Oscar-winning Clint Eastwood Western UNFORGIVEN, which netted a nomination for Best Original Screenplay, he has shown an aptitude for the science-fiction genre with such previous credits as BLADE RUNNER, LEVIATHAN, and THE BLOOD OF HEROES. In fact, there are some loose parallels between BLADE RUNNER and THE UNFORGIVEN: both are morally ambiguous tales about killers who come out of retirement; although the story is told from their point of view, audience can never fully identify with their murderous mission.

David Peoples made his directing debut with THE BLOOD OF HEROES, an action-packed post-apocalyptic science-fiction film starring Rutger Hauer.

"The character in BLADE RUNNER comes from Philip K. Dick and Hampton Fancher," David pointed out. "The only reason I have a credit is out of Hampton Fancher's generosity as a writer; he's a class act. He is the guy who adapted BLADE RUNNER from Dick's book. I did some rewriting, and I did a good job, but the significant creation of the character was Hampton's."

But he also added, "I felt right at home with that kind of character. I think a lot of writers do now. Look at Paul Schrader's stuff—Travis Bickle is a little bit ambiguous, I think. Richard Price [CLOCKERS] also works in that area very effectively." Of his skill at making a character like this accessible, he explained, " Somewhere you have to connect with him or hope that somebody connects with him. Clint Eastwood has played a lot of anti-heroes who are not necessarily nice guys, but in the environment in which they exist you're able to support them as the lesser of two evils."

With 12 MONKEYS, Peoples may seem to be exploring similar territory, with a protagonist (played by Bruce Willis) perceived as a deluded psychotic by the psychiatrists of 1996, but Peoples doesn't see Cole in the same light as Rick Deckard or Will Munny: "He's a person who at a very young age was put at great disadvantage. He's a guy

just struggling to get by. We see him as a person who quite capable of taking care of himself on some level, and certainly somebody with a bit of a temper, but we don't see him as a bad person at all. We saw him as somebody put in an impossible situation and desperately trying to be as decent as he could in those particular environments."

Peoples did the first draft of LEVIATHAN, one of three underwater science-fiction epics (along with DEEPSTAR SIX and THE ABYSS) to come out in 1989. The film bears some rather obvious structural parallels to ALIEN. "When it started out, it was supposed to be 'ALIEN Under Water,' so so it's not surprising that there's some resemblance," Peoples admitted. Producer "Larry Gordon talked me out of discovering tiny insects in the submarine, which had been my plan—to have these almost invisible enemies. Which would have been more like the early part of ALIEN than the second part of ALIEN. Then it went on to become whatever it is. I think it was pretty different, because I saw the rewrite that Jeb Stuart, a very good writer, did on it. Jeb had changed it considerably, and I haven't seen the film, although I hear it's very good."

Peoples made his only directing effort with THE BLOOD OF HEROES. The film is an above-average example of the low-budget, post-apocalyptic school of filmmaking, focusing on a violent game played by small groups of players traveling through the desert. One particular group, led by Rutger Hauer and Joan Chen, is good enough to challenge the official team representing what's left of affluent society, hoping that a victory will gain them entry. Although the simple storyline is mostly an excuse to string together as many action scenes as possible, the film manages to maintain interest throughout its running time.

David Peoples' entry into genre screenwriting came with his revision of Hampton Fancher's script for BLADE RUNNER. Ridley Scott's futuristic masterpiece featured Harrison Ford (above) as a morally ambivalent gunman tracking androids led by Rutger Hauer (inset).

According to Peoples his chance to direct "came about because Chuck Roven produced it. When he produces a film, you just fall in step and do your job! It was a script I had written many years ago, in '77 or '78. Chuck liked it and said I could direct it, and he made that happen. It's one of those Chuck Roven miracles—he could do anything! Not only get the gig but get me through the whole process!"

David Peoples delivered the first draft of LEVIATHAN, which was later rewritten by Jeb Stuart. The film was obviously intended to be "ALIEN Under Water."

Of stepping behind the camera for the first time, Peoples admits, "It was a shock, and it was pretty intimidating. But, to Chuck's credit, I was surrounded by terrific people. I had a wonderful experience in that sense. I had a crew that knocked themselves out to make me look good. I had actors who were not only wonderful people but they had nerves of steel, because they were in the Australian outback with a first-timer. They were terrifically patient with me; I had never worked with actors before, and they guided me through it. In that sense, it was a very good experience."

So, as a writer who has shown a certain facility at *cinefantastique*, what is David Webb Peoples' explanation for what makes a good science-fiction script? "Actually, I don't know an answer to that," he admitted. "I think that any picture you write has to resonate in some way with things people are thinking. So I think good science-fiction pictures are about stuff that people are dealing with. You're just using a tradition, but that tradition, like other genres, is wrapped up in the old story-telling myth. They have a lot to do with those stories down through the ages about heroes, the old stories about Loki or the Greek characters—they were a sort of science fiction. You see some of the old Greek plays, and they remind you of Roger Corman pictures, I think. It's all tied up together, and I think it has to resonate with experiences people are having." □

TERRY GILLIAM

A career profile of one of the cinema's premier fantasists.

By Les Paul Robley and Paul Wardle

On October 18, 1985, in Arthur Knight's Theatrical Film Symposium class at the University of Southern California, 400 students gathered to view the controversial 131-minute director's cut of BRAZIL. Reel One was threaded on the projector; Arthur Knight was filling his pipe and ad-libbing in front of the audience; and director Terry Gilliam was up in the projection booth, talking frantically to his lawyer. As anticipation mounted and the seconds ticked away, it soon became clear that something was amiss.

Eventually, Gilliam shuffled to the stage, looking dejected, and told the restless students that executives in Universal's ebony tower had deemed it "unwise" to show his version of the film. "Is it illegal or not?" he had asked Sid Sheinberg, then president of MCA, the parent company of Universal Pictures. "If it's illegal, then injunct me."

Universal didn't have to. The studio's House Counselor, Sheldon Mittleman (Gilliam said names should be mentioned), agreed that it was okay for the class to see clips from the film. Gilliam offered to show a "two-hour, 11 minute audio-visual aid." But in the end, the head of the university's cinema department finally succumbed to Universal's wishes. Apparently, the department had open access to the studio's extensive film library and didn't want to jeopardize that relationship.

The fiery red knight from THE FISHER KING, a prime example of a fantasy element intruding on the consciousness of a character in the real world.

But this little escapade is merely one of many in the incredible career of Terry Gilliam—the former-Monty Python animator turned fantasy film director. Born in Minneapolis, 1940, in his youth he served as art director for the groundbreaking black-and-white humour magazine *Help!*, working for his idol, Harvey Kurtzman. It was during this period that he chanced to meet John Cleese, then touring in New York City with the British satirical revue, CAMBRIDGE CIRCUS. When *Help!* folded in 1965, Gilliam began selling comic strips and

Visionaries and dreamers: Jonathan

Pryce in BRAZIL (above), Robin Williams In THE FISHER KING (right), John Neville in BARON MUNCHAUSEN, with Gilliam.

panel cartoons to a variety of magazines.

It was a soul-destroying job at an advertising agency and the outrage he felt witnessing the 1967 Los Angeles riot that finally soured Gilliam on remaining in the United States. Arriving in England, he contacted the aforementioned Cleese, who had since become a popular writer-performer on BBC radio and television, and through him was introduced to Humphrey Barclay. Barclay liked the young American cartoonist and gave him work on two British television shows, where he would meet Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, and Neil Innes. With the addition of Cheese and his writing partner Graham Chapman, this group would form the crux of the landmark BBC series MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS. Python would forever change the face of television comedy, and Gilliam's crazy animated links became one of the show's most recognizable trademarks, the style of which is still being ripped off in TV commercials today.

One of the many cavernous sets from Gilliam's dystopian BRAZIL. Elaborate production design, a hallmark of Gilliam's work, often outweighs the narrative.

In the fourth season, with Cleese absent, Gilliam performed more on the show. When Cleese returned for the group's feature films, Gilliam continued to play bit parts, characterized by grotesque make-up and costumes, such as The Keeper Of The Bridge Of Death in MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL and the jailer in MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN. With HOLY GRAIL, Gilliam first tried his hand at live-action directing, along with co-director Terry Jones.

He had found his niche. Since then, he has become one of the most critically acclaimed directors of recent years, with such fanciful efforts as TIME BANDITS, BRAZIL, THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN, and THE FISHER KING. His latest saga, 12 MONKEYS, with Bruce Willis, Brad Pitt and Madeleine Stowe, opened in exclusive engagements this Christmas before going into wide release this month.

Gilliam's first feature is actually a compilation of the best Python bits: AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT. For the film, he and his fellow thespians had to redo all of the skits and animation, which had been shot on videotape or 16mm for the television show. In Gilliam's opinion, some of the live comedy did not fare as well in 35mm. "I had to redo all of the animation, because the screen aspect ratio was different and we could not use the 16mm format," he said. "So all of the animation is completely different, even though it's from the first series. I think the animation generally improved on the film, but it was really hard trying to repeat the same moves, because in animation terms I'm a jazz player as opposed to classical, and the lifeblood of jazz is improvisation. The jazz performance I did for the TV didn't translate as well—it was very repetitive, tedious, and boring, putting all this energy into doing the same sequences. The way I work is I concentrate and say 'This is it; this is once and only.' So I concentrate on everything then."

The film helped introduce Python to the rest of the world that had not seen their television series. Its success eventually led to MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL, which was Gilliam's first attempt at directing live-action sequences as well as doing the animation. "Once we got the money," he recounted, "there were no strings attached. Terry Jones and I were the two obsessed about being film directors, so we said we wanted to direct it. We felt we couldn't do any worse than Ian McNaughton had been doing the shows. On the series, we had controlled the whole thing, and Ian just became one more of us, because everybody was coming up with ideas on how to shoot it. There was never a formalized relationship where he was the director and we were the performers. So we became quite confident, by the time GRAIL came along, that we were capable of directing it ourselves. And the minute people see your name as 'director,' they think: 'Oh, now he's a director,' so people give you money because they saw your name with 'director' in front of it."

Rock groups Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin put up the money for HOLY GRAIL, along with contributions from Elton John and some record companies. "Python was always #1 with pop groups," quipped Gilliam. "Our initial impetus was always pop groups....and impossible taxation in England. Their management thought, 'This is a good way of investing. If it makes money, great. If it doesn't, you've got tax laws.' JABBERWOCKY was the same financing, and then when it came time for LIFE OF BRIAN and TIME BANDITS it was George Harrison who put up the money."

Working with a budget of

only $460,000 was not a problem, according to Gilliam. "In fact, it was one of those things that probably made for a better film. I mean, our ambition was to make a great medieval epic with horses and all that, and we couldn't afford it. We made what we made. We were screaming non-stop about not having what we needed, yet at every point, we always managed to come up with a solution that solved the problem."

As co-director, what did Gilliam contribute? "The look of the thing, I think—that's where my strength was," he claimed. "Terry and I were in general agreement about most things—at least at the start. Then it becomes more difficult when you're directing, and I say, 'That's what I think we ought to be doing,' and Terry says, 'But I think we should...' That's where it became more and more complicated, because there's a crew waiting to know what to do. The way it eventually evolved was that Terry Jones spent his time with the guys, and I was in back of the camera. That worked reasonably well. I was in a rather bad frame of mind because, having worked for years with pieces of paper that never talked back, suddenly I was dealing with the rest of the guys in the group who were pissing and moaning the whole time. In one scene, they didn't see why they had to be wearing armor for this shot where the camera was in a hole, shooting up at the trojan rabbit being flung at them. They were complaining the whole time, and I finally said, 'Well, fuck the lot of you! I'm off!' I was very petulant in those days. I would say, 'Direct it yourself! I'm not going to deal with this.' There was a lot of that. And in the thick of all this, while we were just scraping our way through, and just as we were getting somewhere, Graham one drunken evening went berserk against Terry and me: 'You arrogant little assholes! What makes you think you can direct? Why shouldn't Ian McNaughton be directing? You guys are fucking everything up!' That's all we needed at that point—Graham going on one of his tirades."

The troupe was allowed complete freedom to ridicule the Arthurian legend. Gilliam cites Pier Paolo Pasolini as the inspiration for the film's grungy take on period filmmaking. "He had made THE CANTERBURY TALES and others which, for better or worse, have a great sense of the place and the atmosphere, and Terry and I were obsessed with that. A lot of the humour came out of the reality: shit, mud, and attitudes. That was really important to me: that we make the thing smell and stink and feel right. Again, there was a lot of trouble from John, who didn't want to deal with all this crap, and Eric, who didn't really like it either. Graham put up with it only some days. It was Mike, Terry, and I who really were serious about recreating a time and a place. Before HOLY GRAIL, comedy was always light, bright, airy, clean, and we decided to be as serious as Pasolini or any of the other great filmmakers at recreating an era. If it had just been the silliness without the atmosphere, I don't think it would've been as funny. We had huge fights on the TV show, trying to make it look darker, and have shadows. You can do that in drama, but not in comedy. We never succeeded in making it darker, because Ian never quite got it, and the budget was never there, or the technicians didn't want to know about it. So, the way we approached the film was to try to get all of that, so it was dark and it was dingy and it was dirty and it was smelly and it was painful and it was cold. Get all of that stuff on film, and out of that the comedy springs."

"Python were just six people good at what they did. We were in the position of making films to please ourselves, which is what people should be doing."

Gilliam began his career in show business as the lone American member of England's Monty Python group, for which he provided animated vignettes.

Not only did Gilliam co-direct the live-action, animate the transition scenes, and play Arthur's trusted servant Patsy (who bangs coconuts together to create hoof sounds for his horseless king); he also supervised the special opticals. "Animation started me in special effects," he admitted. "Knowing about technical things such as how to throw cows from model railway sets over battlements in HOLY GRAIL. We did it in my backyard. I drew my own mattes and cut them out. At that point we were renting equipment. We rotoscoped castles and matted them out."

Using money from the success of HOLY GRAIL, Gilliam and partner, Kent Houston, formed their own effects company, Peerless Camera and Optical. Peerless services outside features and commercials, and all of Gilliam's subsequent effects films have been assembled there. "We didn't have to make money on Peerless," admitted Gilliam. "It was a unique situation. The money I initially invested into equipment was all written off against tax, so to me it was just gifts from the government. So, in our early stages, where most people are busy having to take all sorts of shit work to pay off the loans, we didn't have to do that. We built up this rep doing only the sort of quality work that we wanted to do, and it has really paid off, because we've never had those pressures that other people had.

"We employ a very small number of people," Gilliam continued. "One tries to keep it that way because then everybody's in contact with each other all the time. I'm there firsthand with the guys building the models so we can talk about it rather than him talking to the supervisor and him to the director, and you get into a system of miscommunication all the time. And then everyone's trying to cover themselves so they do twice as much to make sure they can never be caught out. That's where the expense comes in films: Everyone trying to build twice as much as is needed because you don't know what the director really wants and you don't want him shouting: 'Why didn't you think of that as well?' I spend all my time trying to break that down

Man of Many Faces: Gilliam adopted a variety of appearances performing for Python. Here, he is relatively recognizable as Patsy in MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL.

so that I'm there early enough so people can talk to me and say what they think."

HOLY GRAIL's success also spawned a sister effort of sorts, called JABBERWOCKY (1977). This, Gilliam's solo directing debut, was notably inauspicious, substituting increased gore for laughs. Worse, the film irritated fans by billing itself as a "Monty Python Film," despite the presence of only three members of the troupe: Michael Palin in the lead, and Jones and Gilliam as cameo victims eviscerated by the diabolical beast of the title. "At that time," said Gilliam, "producer Sandy Levison was partnered with David Putnam. They were preparing a film for Fox [ALL THIS AND WORLD WAR II], using Beatles music sung by current pop stars, all put to WWII footage. I was supposed to work on that, and Sandy wanted to include some of my animations in it, but I kept not signing the contracts. It became clear I didn't really want to do it, and he then talked about JABBERWOCKY. It then went back to the record people —we always seem to have had the same backers."

One notable element that this film has in common with HOLY GRAIL is the intentionally unglamorous period atmosphere. "I think we share that in common with Woody Allen. He understands about making something look right. To me, that's where the comedy springs from. The more real you can make it, the further out you can go. But if the whole thing is lightweight, middle-of-the-road stuff, there's nothing there."

"I was fed up with animation by the time of THE MEANING OF LIFE. I didn't want to be stuck as the animator of the group, so I said I would make a little film."

The figure of Death in MONTY PYTHON'S THE MEANING OF LIFE, which Gilliam went on to use to less comic effect in BARON MUNCHAUSEN.

How does Gilliam manage to obtain that look so economically? "I don't think it's difficult. You just have to really feel it. I immerse myself in the atmosphere as much as possible and always try to make it worse that it ought to be. I go over the top—add more shit. By the time it ends up on screen it looks about right. I see films where all the costumes still have creases in them. I'm sure it was a reaction against all the Doris Day-Rock Hudson films where everybody is clean and impeccably dressed with beautifully maintained teeth. Life doesn't look like that. Life's a mess! So I keep pushing that way."

Gilliam acts as his own production designer, even though the job title is technically handled by someone on the set. His background as an illustrator enables him to draw what he needs very quickly. Other directors must do this verbally, and things can get lost in translation. That's why all of his films carry their distinctive look.

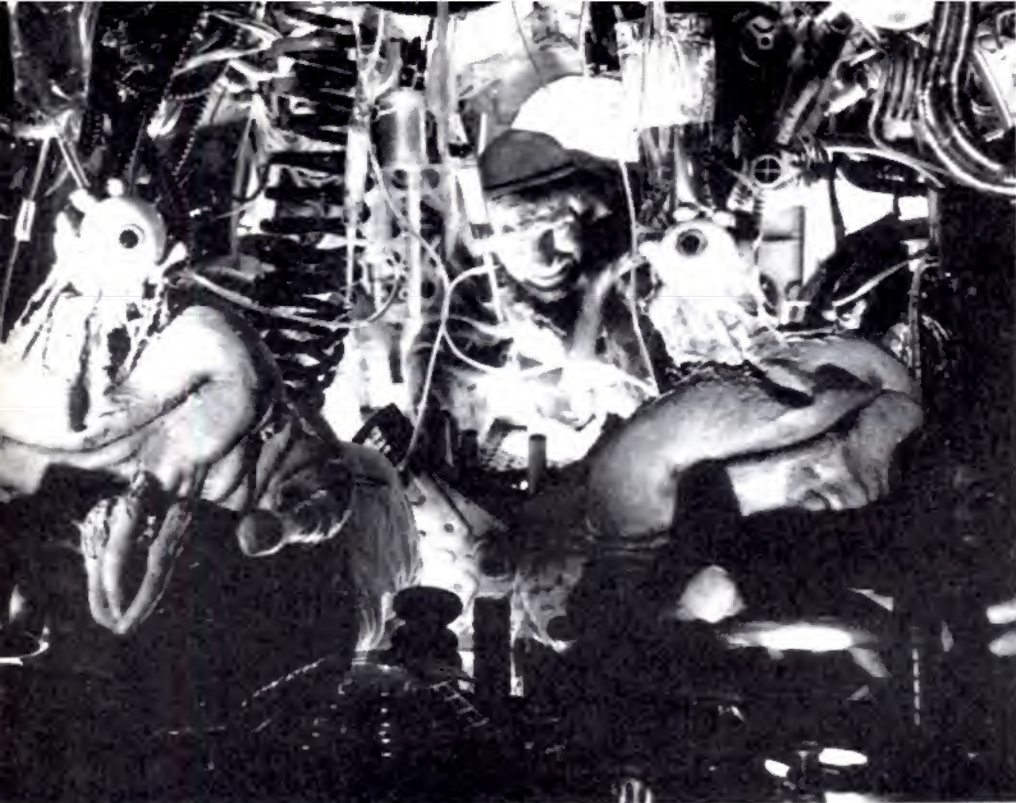
"A lot of directors get away with murder, because their intelligence and skill lies in hiring good people and letting them do what they do. I want to hire really good people, but I want to create a leap-frog situation: they come up with an idea, and I come up with a better idea; then they come up with an even better idea, and we all leap forward and excite each other. If I'm going to be a good director, then I've got to be good in all of those areas: I've got to be able to design a costume; I've got to be able to design a set; I've got to know about lighting. Unless I can do all those things, I don't feel I'm doing my job. The point is, I don't think I can do those jobs *better* than the people I hire. That's a dangerous thing. Sometimes I can do it better, but most times I like knowing that person is doing it better than I could.

"Sometimes I think, 'Well, I could do that better,' but won't say it because I don't want that feeling to creep into the group that, 'Oh, Mr.Know-it-all is doing everything.' Actually, as I get older, I get more tired, to the point where I *don't* want to do it all. Thank God someone is choosing pink as the colour of this costume, because I don't want to make this decision. People know what kind of films I make. Your reputation and your work precede you, which is very useful because they know I have an eye for detail. Even the details I'm *not* concerned about, people think I am, because they've seen the work I do. Once upon a time, I *was* interested in every detail. But now I'm more interested in delegating those things. All those people are thinking I'm watching everything, so they work twice as hard, and that's good."

Back at the time of JABBERWOCKY, Gilliam was still interested in being involved with all the details, even down to designing the film's titular creature. "The trick is it's backward," he revealed. "I'd always watched guys in suits walking around and their knees always gave the effect away. So I used a guy and turned him around. His arms became the wings. The head and neck were controlled via wires by a cherry picker, like a puppet. Pneumatic cables moved the jaws. Once you've got a guy inside it's much easier and so much more clever than a machine. I've always asked people how they thought it was done, and no one's thought of a guy walking backwards. It's so simple they don't think of it. Most good effects end up being very simple; then we fix it in editing. I hate getting trapped in that world of special effects experts who are showing off to each other and trying to do too much in one shot so that it becomes an expensive process. I'd rather do it with fast cutting. The audience isn't aware, and that's not what a film should be about. It's not a show piece for special effects men. The effects should only be a part of the whole process."

One distinctive quality found in all of Gilliam's films is that he finds the right locations. "That's one of the most enjoyable parts of making a film," he

The Many Faces of Gilliam: seen here as a raving prophet in MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN.



Gilliam served only as production designer of Python's second film, LIFE OF BRIAN, except for the hilarious alien abduction scene, which he conceived and directed.

claimed. "Since we write the stuff, if we suddenly stumble across something, we can say, 'Let's change and do it here!' In JABBERWOCKY, Gilliam stumbled across the incredible locale for the climactic battle. "I've got a homing device inside me, because I find locations really easily. I was driving down the road, and I found this cleft in this wall and went in. There was this fucking great quarry that was just bizarre. Originally, that whole battle was supposed to take place on a beach. I said, 'I'll fucking change this. This has a whole different look to it. It's even better because it's enclosed; it's a place where a monster would live. It's protective.' So I was able to change it without arguing with anybody. I only have to argue with myself!"

Next came MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN. Because their television series was becoming more and more successful (the BBC shows were being rerun across America on PBS), larger organizations were becoming interested in Python as a possible feature film franchise. One such organization was EMI—that is, until someone got around to actually reading the script. They labeled LIFE OF BRIAN blasphemous and backed out almost literally at the last minute. "The crew was leaving for Tunisia on Saturday, and on Thursday they pulled out," Gilliam remembered all too well. "Just like that, we were in the shit."

After getting no response from other studios, the film was rescued by ex-Beatle George Harrison, whose friendship with Eric Idle had previously resulted in THE RUTTLES, a mock television documentary of a pseudo-Beatles group. Harrison also happened to be a big Python fan. So, he and manager Denis O'Brien backed the movie themselves.

"I met George when HOLY GRAIL opened in L.A.," recalled Gilliam, "when Eric and I had come out here to help promote it. We became buddies. Eric is a lot more sociable than I am, and he cultivated the friendship. Eric brought him into the group. I mean, George kept popping in at different times. He turned up when we did the Monty Python Stage Show at New York City Center. He sang the Lumberjack Song with us. It's weird that when you get to a certain level of notoriety, other people who are doing stuff that you're fans of are fans of yours, and you keep bumping into them. There's this immediate recognition and you have this mutual understanding, yet you're not friends at all. You only know each other for five minutes."

The film debuted in America in 1979 and was officially condemned from many religious pulpits, although many rank-and-file churchgoers found nothing offensive in the content. The story actually steers clear of any outright blasphemy, instead satirizing religious fanaticism and political factionalism. The thematic underpinning helped make this a more sustained feature than HOLY GRAIL overall, albeit seldom matching the inspired levels of lunacy seen in its predecessor's best sequences.

This time directing chores were handled by the other Terry; Gilliam supervised the visual design and effects, and created the film's mid-point highlight: an alien spaceship accidentally abducts Brian (the late Graham Chapman), and all hell breaks loose for a few riotous minutes.

"I was getting more and more bored with animation, and I wanted to experiment more with effects," said Gilliam. The entire spaceship sequence was done in a little studio the size of a hotel room. Star fields were created with black Astrolux paper, splattered white paint, and airbrushed colors. "We shot ships against black velvet and rotoscoped them," Gilliam explained. "The stars were quite subtle, and at the lab when we were grading the film I said: 'You can't see them. It's not working.' They said: 'What do you mean?' 'There are supposed to be a million stars, and they're all moving.' Finally, we looked at a frame with a magnifying glass and the guy said: 'Shit! I see what you mean.' Every shot has movement in it. I did three exposures with different speeds on the stars to create depth. In fact, I think I cut the thing too fast."

But the speed of the sequence manages to pick up the pace at the film's slow mid-way point. The interior of the ship was actually constructed on a set of inner tubes, which allowed the set to be jiggled to suggest speed. The creatures' arms were connected to the steering wheels, with someone offscreen operating the wheel. The actors inside the suits were actually holding the eyeballs with their arms. For the meteor shower (which, incidentally, predated the asteroid field in EMPIRE STRIKES BACK), Gilliam used painted sponges stuck on rotating rods against black velvet. All eight passes of tumbling rock were accomplished in-camera on 35mm for a first-generation look.

"The nicest compliment for me was learning George Lucas had seen it and loved it. 'That's great,' I thought. 'He's done STAR WARS with far more elaborate effects, and we've done something for $50 to achieve the same end.'"

MONTY PYTHON'S

The Many Faces of Gilliam: here he essays a soldier who enjoys his work in MEANING OF LIFE

Left: a gory joke from JABBERWOCKY: a begger has cut off his foot for sympathy. Gilliam's first solo directing effort was misleadingly presented as a Python film. Despite Eric Idle's presence in the above publicity photo, only Michael Palin has a starring role, with Jones and Gilliam delivering cameos.

MEANING OF LIFE (1983) was their last group effort, directed by Jones, with some cool animation effects provided by Gilliam. For the Grim Reaper's dinner visit, guests are driven to the Other World in space sedans toward a swirling black hole. Gilliam used photo cut-outs of cars against a four-layered background of air-brushed swirls superimposed over one another at various speeds of rotation to obtain dimension. "We had to make mattes of the cars with the Rostrum camera and then did a silhouette repeat to give us the matte. Our Rostrum cameras are computerized so they can actually repeat moves, a la motion-control. No backlash or gear slop to speak of. We can always do a backlash compensation, if necessary. We changed the exposure so, as you go into the vortex, it gets brighter. It's little things like that: As something flies away and gets distant you soften or diffuse it and take out the contrast so it looks further away through much atmosphere with a color shift. Very slight adjustments make it work.

"I'd rather put miniatures half in shadow so you're only getting glimpses of them—like the way Al Whitlock paints mattes," Gilliam added. "If you get close to one of his paintings it doesn't have much detail. He knows exactly how much detail he needs to paint which the camera will pick up. Things in the distance have to be totally impressionistic, because what you're seeing on film is so crude—when you actually analyze the image you're looking at, there's nothing there."

Gilliam's short "The Crimson Permanent Insurance" gets this film off to a great and unexpected start. "I had been drawing some buildings with sails on them, and I kept thinking about that, and I wanted to use them somewhere, so I sat down and wrote that. It was written as a cartoon originally, and I thought, 'Fuck, let's just do it!' because I was fed up with animation by the time of THE MEANING OF LIFE. I didn't want to be stuck being the animator of the group, I was bored with it, so I said I would make a little film. It was kind of a bargain: 'You do the animation, and then you can do this film.' It was supposed to plug itself into the film, two-thirds of the way through, and we shot it. I had my own sound stage, my own cast and crew and everything. Then we put it into the film, and it didn't work. There was this pressure to cut it shorter. It was never going to work in the film. It was a different rhythm. It didn't have anything to do with the world of THE MEANING OF LIFE. The pace was very different. Terry kept pressuring me to cut it shorter and suggested pulling it out of the film and sticking it in as a short at the front. BINGO! It just worked as a treat up front on its own."

The unidentified short is baffling at first because it seems unrelated to the film. "That's what was good about it," laughed Gilliam. "It helped me create another form." That form would pre-figure Gilliam's later features, BRAZIL and THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN. "It was trying to see how far I could push reality into a cartoon world. To me, it's closer to MUNCHAUSEN than BRAZIL—making it fantastic and real at the same time."

The former Pythons keep in touch ("We all share the same office and accountant, so that's how we keep in contact—everybody always knows what's going on."); but since the death of Chapman the chances for a Python revival are as remote as a reunion for the Beatles. However, Gilliam claims such an event did occur, in a way. "When we did this Python 25th Anniversary festival last October in L.A., one evening was dedicated to Graham. At the end of all the film clips, the moderator said, 'It's a pity Graham can't be here with us,' and his former boyfriend, David Sherlock, said, 'But he is here.' He pulled out an envelope full of ashes and sprinkled them over the audience. People freaked. I don't think most people believed it was really Graham, but it *was* really Graham."

Will there be another film with all five of them? "It depends on enough people at one point deciding we all want to do a film," he concluded. "I think Eric and Terry would like to do another one. Terry is making WIND IN THE WILLOWS at the moment, and he would love to have made it as a Python film, because all the parts are perfect for it, but it didn't happen that way. John's got Mike in A FISH CALLED WANDA 2: DEATH FISH or whatever it's called. If I was doing a film, and there was a part for Mike or John or Terry or Eric, sure, I'd get them in there, because they're great. I wanted to do Wagner's RING [OF THE NEIBELUNGEN], because Python's at its best when dealing with gods and cosmic-size things, because we bring them down to icons we can break. I like the RING because it's so ponderous; it's got gods of all sorts and underworld characters. But to get the group together now, I just don't think we'd work well together."

By 1980, Gilliam had become bored with the slow mechanics of animation and wanted to incorporate their absurdist style into his own live-action feature. The result was TIME BANDITS (1981),

The Many Faces of Gilliam: he even took a shot at drag comedy, in this scene from MEANING OF LIFE.

“It was Pasolini who inspired us at that point, because he had made THE CANTERBURY TALES, which had a great sense of place and atmosphere.”

his first "official" Terry Gilliam Film, although it is actually his second solo directing effort. Co-scripted with Michael Palin, and featuring cameos by Palin and John Cleese, the film is arguably no less connected to Monty Python than JABBERWOCKY in terms of involvement by members of the troupe; but for the first time, themes and plot devices emerge which will become recognizable throughout subsequent features as trademarks of Gilliam's individual style.

The story of TIME BANDITS follows the adventures of six dwarfs and a young English schoolboy (Craig Warnock) as they travel through time visiting historical figures (Cleese as a condescending Robin Hood, Sean Connery as King Agamemnon, and Ian Holm as Napoleon) via a time-hole that appears in the child's bedroom. Funding came after Denis O'Brien and George Harrison became the managers of Python, forming a production unit called Handmade Films. "BANDITS seemed a completely commercial idea," said Gilliam. "It was conceived with the entire family in mind. Adults could go and wouldn't be embarrassed; kids could go and wouldn't be bored. The plot had something for everyone without pandering or compromising. It worked on all levels."

Despite its strong marketability, Gilliam was unable to secure financing anywhere in Hollywood. "We were told family films don't work: 'Walt Disney is family films; Disney isn't successful these days, so end of conversation.' There's always a neat simple answer why they don't want to give you money. And the answers for giving you the money are often even sillier."

Even the finished film was passed over by the studios. Avco/Embassy finally agreed to distribute it if Handmade Films (the original financiers) would guarantee $5 million in prints and ads. "It was a ridiculous arrangement," Gilliam complained. "It didn't end up costing Avco anything. Even though the [Python] films were successful and made lots of money, they didn't exist in their world. It was as though we arrived here as total novices and never did anything. Because Python had been so totally outside the system, they tried to pretend we didn't exist. That's what frightened me about the thing. I hate supporting organizations that are so lazy and inefficient and mediocre. The lower echelons are terrified so much that no one dares to present an opinion. Once it's clear what the head of the operation is feeling, it's extraordinary how they're able to twist, bend, and alter themselves into the shape of their leader.

"I wanted to cast Katherine Helmond as the ogre's wife," Gilliam continued. "They wanted Ruth Gordon because she was in films, whereas Helmond

Gilliam's first work directing live-action: MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL. The production design, locations, and photography were worthy of any serious film, instead of copping out with "funny" production values.

MONKEYS

REVIEW

Not with a bang but a whimper...

TWELVE MONKEYS

Universal Pictures presents an Atlas Entertainment Production. 12/95. Producer: Charles Roven. Directed by Terry Gilliam. Executive producers: Bob Cavallo, Gary Levinson, Bob Kosberg. Music, Paul Buchmaster. Costumes, Julie Weiss. Editor, Mick Audsley. Photography, Roger Pratt. Production design, Jeffrey Beecroft 131 minutes. Rated R. Screenplay by David Web Peoples and Lisa Peoples. Inspired by Chris Marker's LA JETEE.

Cole	Bruce Willis
Dr. Railly	Madeleine Stowe
Jeffrey Goines	Brad Pitt
Dr. Goines	Christopher Plummer
Dr. Fletcher	Frank Gorshin

By Steve Biodrowski

In retrospect, there was never any chance of remaking LA JETEE, a remarkable piece of filmmaking with a style inextricably linked to its content. Perhaps Chris Marker was simply using techniques from his documentary background (still frames, narration), but those frozen moments of time can't help but enhance a story about the nature of time and returning to specific moments over and over again.

Needless to say, Terry Gilliam films his actors at 24 f.p.s., not in still photos. But TWELVE MONKEYS is not simply a Hollywood mainstreaming of a European art film. This is the most challenging and difficult film released by a major studio last year.

The new script retains and even amplifies the ambiguity of whether its protagonist, Cole (Willis), is in fact from the future, expanding the plot to feature length by including new material involving a psychiatrist (Stowe) trying to convince him that he is delusional. The story is intentionally told from these two contrasting viewpoints, thus distancing us from Cole: instead of sharing his subjective experience of being "mentally divergent" (i.e., existing in two separate times), we often see him as a deluded and possibly dangerous madman.

Also, his quest is not to prevent the plague ("How can I prevent what already happened?") but to secure a sample of the virus that will help save *future* generations. This lends an air of fatality to the proceedings, which are compared to rewatching a film: it doesn't change; it just seems different because the viewer has changed.

Cole (Bruce Willis) is confined in the interrogation chair during his return to the future, where he is questioned about his mission into the past.

The result is a strangely elegiac doomsday scenario, haunting and hopeless, yet somehow beautiful. Gilliam brings his patented dense visual texture to the futuristic underworld, and contrasts itwith a few vivid images of the planet's surface, no longer populated by humanity—no great loss.

However, these sequences are but a fraction of the film, which deals mostly with Cole's quest in the 1990s. Location shooting in Baltimore and Philadelphia conveys a world stricken with entropy even before being decimated by plague. It's an entropy which infects not just architecture or physical health but mental outlook as well. The world is already crumbling, because we no longer know how to create meaning. Ultimately, the question of whether Cole is a time traveler or a madman is resolved—but abandoned. He may be telling the truth, but that doesn't help bring any greater understanding when the experience of reality has broken down past the point of creating order out of chaos. In the most telling scene, Stowe's Dr. Railly laments that psychiatry is the new religion, telling us what's real and what's not, and she has lost her faith. The only people left who believe in anything are the crazy ones, like Jeffrey Goines (Pitt), leader of the so-called Army of Twelve Monkeys, a fringe group of suspected eco-terrorists, whose grand gesture is releasing incarcerated animals from a zoo.

Pitt's presence is a link to SEVEN. If that film is about the breakdown of "meta-narratives" (as Patrica Moir says) to the point where a serial killer uses the Seven Deadly Sins as a model for a bloody work of art meant to shock the conscience of the modern world, then TWELVE MONKEYS portrays a world in which methods of understanding have atrophied to the point where a lone man can justify unleashing a plague that will destroy humanity. In this case, it's not the meek but the animals who will inherit the earth. □

was TV. It didn't matter that Katherine was more famous throughout the world; she was TV and didn't count." (Helmond finally did end up in the film.)

Even though the story is an episodic series of historical vignettes, some less humorous than others, the fanciful ode to the wonders of boyhood imagination is consistently delightful, enhanced by some imaginative production design and special effects. For instance, the scene wherein the monocled Randall (David Rappoport) and his followers are trapped high up inside suspended cages is a masterpiece of forced-perspective miniatures.

The Striding Giant, filmed at 94 frames per second, proved to be an excellent example of a special effect that was both simple and effective. "We started by getting really tall actors," Gilliam recollected. "It didn't work because we were using extremely wide-angle lenses. A tall guy then looks like a bean pole. So we ended up getting a short wrestler who was massive. By the time you put the lens low enough, he's the right shape, even though he's only about 5'4". He was practically running, and at 94 f.p.s. his muscles were really swinging massively. When he steps on the model house where the little creatures are having their argument, we shot it with black

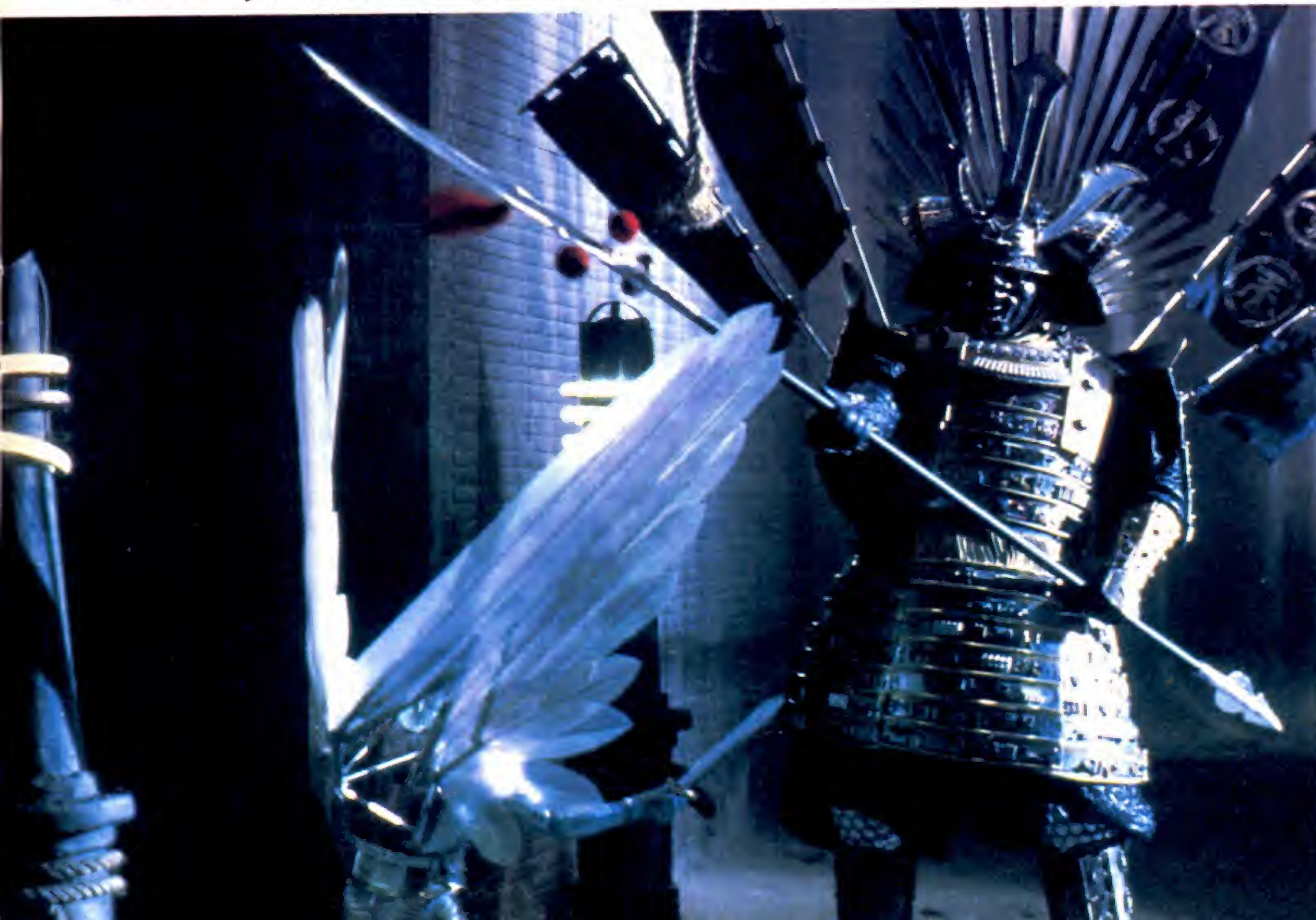
Left: the interrogation chair from BRAZIL foreshadows 12 MONKEYS. Above: Michael Palin conducts the questioning of Jonathan Pryce.

velvet, and months later I got around to shooting the creatures inside a set with the same dimensions. Again, I faked it. Where everybody here [in Hollywood] is so busy working out exact lens formulas, I just looked at it and faked it. I think you can over-scientificate [sic] a thing, and I prefer to shape it until it looks right by eye, because that's all that really matters in the end."

Gilliam's aptitude for reworking material in progress paid off when a scene involving two spider women was shot and then abandoned—because the film was running too long, and the budget could not accommodate the effects necessary to complete the sequence. "We had to get from the giant's hatboat to the fortress. Originally, they went through a hand forest and were trapped by the spider women. So, how do you get from A to B in as quick a time as possible? The thing is: you're there already; you just can't see it. So that's where the invisible barrier came from. We went to a beach called Dungeness on the south coast of England in freezing weather in January. It's very bleak and desolate, and it's all [made up of] great pebbles. Right to the left is a huge nuclear power station. So we got these great prop bones sticking out of the ground and all these tiny people, and we all looked like mutants from atomic radiation. Very bizarre."

For the climactic laser battle with David Warner (as "Evil"), Gilliam choreographed members of the crew waving lights around the set. Once they decided which take to use, it was simply a matter in post-production of animating laser beams to match the interactive lighting on the set. "The characters are running up the stairs, and the lasers are zipping past them," said Gilliam. "The only way it looks real is if the laser, as it goes by, has an effect and lights him up. You need interactive lighting to make the rotoscoped animation effects look realistic. We also had little explosions going off randomly. I just tend to throw things rather than plan everything out. There's a scene where a whole section of wall comes crashing down on them. We got a lot of guys up there with dust and shit, and I just yelled 'Now!' It's as simple as that."

Sam's fantasy from BRAZIL: battling a samurai warrior statue , accomplished with forced perspective and miniatures.



TIME BANDITS was a big success for Hand-Made Films, but the company put together by George Harrison and manager Dennis O'Brien ran into trouble and later folded. This was to be the last time one of Gilliam's films was bank-rolled by a rock star; in the future he would have to go the Hollywood route for financing. Gilliam recalled, "When we were doing TIME BANDITS, I kept saying, 'Come on, George! Don't you see what's going on?' What happens in these cases is you've got an accountant-lawyer-man-

Fanciful imagery from ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN; left, the King of the Moon (Robin Williams) loses his head; above, a sea monster.

ager like Dennis, who is incredibly talented at business, and he seems even clearer in his thinking than we do. He looks around and says, 'I'm as talented as they are; I can make better decisions.' So he started interfering more and more in the films and fucking things up. I didn't want to be around it, and it was a real pity because it could have been a good operation."

The battle over the release of Gilliam's next film engaged his efforts almost as much as actually making it. Ironically, the story of BRAZIL is about a social system where people tread lightly and don't want to become involved. Gilliam has irreverently called it a "Post-Orwellian view of a pre-Orwellian society," even though he has never read *1984*. "BRAZIL is like the 'Crimson Insurance sketch,'" he said. "It's not realistic with a plot and characters the way most films are made. It's very stylized, hyper-real, surreal."

The somewhat cryptic title refers to that ultimate state of bliss which all of us yearn to attain. It represents the lead character's escape from reality. "Unfortunately, they went and named a country after it," quipped the film's star Jonathan Pryce.

Gilliam conceived his critically acclaimed masterpiece while scouting locations on the beach at Dungeness during the invisible barrier scene from TIME BANDITS. There was a desolate landscape overlooking the ocean with an old man sitting, listening to the radio, which was playing "Brazil." The counterpoint of the moment struck Gilliam: the bleakness which was evidently a part of this man's life, contrasted with the romantic rumba.

"Terry does this sort of thing all the time," remarked Pryce. "It amazes me. He always carries a notebook everywhere he goes. For example, when the woman's hitting me over the head, she has this dog with tape over its backside. Well, he saw that in Copenhagen, and it was to stop it from crapping in the street. That's why the film is so rich."

How Gilliam pitched this hellish negative fantasy to conservative studio heads is indeed a testament to his incredible ingenuity. TIME BANDITS turned out to be a $42 million success, which led the studios to come calling with projects. "The advantage of TIME BANDITS' making a lot of money was that it got BRAZIL off the ground," said Gilliam, explaining that the worldwide popularity of the Python pictures had gained him "no status in Hollywood" until "TIME BANDITS made a fortune in the States. Then by Hollywood standards I was a money-maker, and they wanted me to do Hollywood films, which I've never been interested in. I turned down ENEMY MINE, and Fox felt that anyone they had deemed worthy to direct their Number One project must be the Number One man in town. They've got to dignify everything they do, so it kind of turned me into a momentary superstar. They then re-read BRAZIL and said it was too much like BLADE RUNNER, which automatically meant it was destined for failure, since that film wasn't a success. Studios seem over-intent on labeling and putting your film in a box so they can deal with it. If it looks like a successful box, that's great!"

Circumstances ultimately came to Gilliam's rescue. "MEANING OF LIFE had just won all sorts of awards at the '83 Cannes Film Festival. I ended up performing the entire script for Universal in one of their hotel suites. It was just like a scene from the movies. It took me three hours to act out all the parts. They really liked it; Fox arrived, and we moved into this glorious situation where two companies just had to have it. That's another rule they seem to live by—if someone else wants it, it must be good." Fox put up $6 million of the $15 million budget and distributed the long version of the film in Europe. Universal put up the rest and refused to release the film in America, canceling the proposed February and September '85 openings.

"When we first took BRAZIL around Hollywood and nobody wanted it," Gilliam recalled, "we realized the budget was too low. No one was taking it seriously. So, we upped it to $15 million. I know that sounds cynical, but we weren't doing it to be cynical. We were simply playing the game. We'd go to meetings where they'd tell us how brilliant it was, and we'd just sit there and laugh and behave not at all like you're supposed to. I'm amazed at how studio execs spend their whole day trying to dignify the proceedings and show great strength of character and foresight. They need to talk like that. I don't, because I know already what we can do. We don't have to spend our time pretending to be talented and hard-working and intelligent. I get a terrible feeling that most studio executives do."

During filming, the studio left Gilliam entirely alone. He and producer Arnon Milchan had worked out a simple arrangement: Gilliam would have absolute control up to the point where he violated the budget. "I could do things like: 12 weeks into shooting, I realized the script was far too long and effects way too complicated, so I stopped production for two weeks to cut things out. I threw out some of the best fantasy stuff, which would have made the film five hours long, costing $25 million. If we had been tied-in with the studios, they would have gone crazy. Unlike most directors, who say they've got to have more, I drove everybody crazy by constantly asking for less."

His crew ended up shooting for nine months as opposed to the 26 weeks they were originally allowed. But they still

managed to deliver the finished film under budget. "I think the main reason we were able to do that was the lack of studio interference," Gilliam believes. "We never had to justify our proceedings to a lot of people. We worked out what we could and couldn't do amongst ourselves and made the changes sensibly and intelligently. Again, Hollywood tends to spend so much of its time talking in meetings."

Jonathan Pryce, who played put-upon protagonist Sam Lowry, seems drawn to the sinister roles such as the graverobber in THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVILS or Mr. Dark in Ray Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. "They are the more interesting characters," he said. "I think it's more fun to play the devil than to play the doctor. On the other side of the coin is to play a character like Sam Lowry, who is the innocent victim instead of the oppressor. To play the innocent in a positive way is quite challenging. Terry and I discussed him at length before we started filming and by the time we were a couple of weeks into the movie, the character was pretty well established.

"The nature of Sam's character is that he doesn't call the shots; he's a reactor rather than an actor, which is why he dreams a lot," Pryce added. "There were so many bizarre things Terry set up around me to dictate how I would react—explosions, dismembered bodies, funny actors—that it was not a difficult role to play."

Of the two roles—the real persecuted official and the imaginary flying hero—Pryce loathed the latter. Not because of the work involved or the discomfort (Pryce suffers from claustrophobia), but because the character was boring: he just runs after women and fights monsters. "Sam and his story started out mainly as an excuse for all the fantastic imagery Terry could put on the screen," explained Pryce. "But, when we started to shoot, he became more interested in Sam as a character. As a result, he threw out a lot of the dreams. After four-and-a-half months, when I finally donned the muscles and the wig, this became the worst part of the film—for him, too—a big bore."

"Those are the moments when I really like Eric. For all of his selfishness, he was really great. He was putting up with a lot of shit, and he stuck it out."

Gilliam credits former fellow Python member Eric Idle with helping him get through the difficult production process of making BARON MUNCHAUSEN.

Critics agree that the film's flying segments were the best ever filmed up to that time. "Unlike SUPERMAN—THE MOVIE, they never stayed on a shot for more than a few seconds," said Pryce. "You never had time to pick out the flaws. It was more like the old television SUPERMAN, where you rarely saw him fly. The less you saw of the flying the more you believed it."

A marvelous shot occurs when he swoops down, kisses Jill, then careens backward in what looks like a graceful ballet maneuver. "I didn't need wires for that one," he confessed. "I'm simply standing up, and I move in, kiss her, then bend backward. It's wonderfully cut together. I'm standing; she's standing; it's just the magic of filmmaking, folks!"

All of the long shots were achieved with a one-foot miniature that had a wonderful articulated double action in the wings—just like a bird's—which is what made it appear so realistic. The clouds were fashioned out of chicken wire covered with angel hair. The crew shifted them around to come up with different cloud formations to suit the scene's framing. Finally, dry ice and smoke machines added the finishing touch. The model was shot real-time with very little blue-screen used, because shots of the figure flying through the dry ice and smoke would have been difficult to get with traveling mattes.

"We always appeared to be moving the camera so it isn't a static shot," Gilliam pointed out. "Constant movement disguises things. The trick is to choose a take where you don't see the wires. One take we had to paint out four frames that just caught the light, but it was worth it because it was a beautiful take and we didn't want to lose it."

One blue-screen shot caused some problems: "The labs were using the wrong baths, and it took us a couple of months to sort out what had gone wrong," Gilliam recalled. "Pryce was wearing the silver, translucent, iridescent wings and holding the girl, who had the thinnest of blonde hair blowing in bright sunlight against a light blue sky. When you're pulling off mattes you have to get the right density of gray to hold back a certain amount for the see-through objects like wings and hair. If the balance is wrong, an image of the black matte spreads out so there isn't an accurate line-up. The principal is simple, but the practice is very difficult. When we got to the shot, it wouldn't work. What happened was [the lab] had supplied us with the wrong information."

Peerless has since set up their own black and white processor so they don't have to rely on outside labs. "The problem is the way the film system is structured," claimed Gilliam. "The pressure is to go to ILM or Dream-Quest because they're the proven pros; but then you can't afford to gamble. Since my films are done in-house, we *can* afford to gamble, because I know what's going on if it's not working. The great advantage is, if it's going wrong, I as the director can say, 'Stop: we won't do that; we will do this!' That happened on BRAZIL. There was a whole sequence with a landscape of gigantic Daliesque eyeballs that wasn't working, and everything else was falling by the wayside. I just wrote it out at the last minute. We've got a test of it that's pretty good. It was close to working, but I just had the feeling that to get it right it was going to take so much time."

Another consummate piece of filmmaking is the fight with the giant samurai warrior. It was all shot "in-camera," first generation, with no matte lines around the actors. 6'8" Winston Dennis, who played the samu-

The Many Faces of Gilliam: in another cameo from MEANING OF LIFE he appears as a leprous begger.

rai, was never actually in the same shot with Pryce. Whenever Sam and the samurai physically appear together, it's a forced-perspective effect, using a small boy dressed as Sam in the foreground.

The elaborate Information Retrieval Chamber (or 'Torture Room,' as the crew dubbed it) was not the same as it had been written in the script. "We found this place, and it it was so spectacular and terrifying that I just changed all my ideas in the script," said Gilliam. "There's a big optical with him sitting in this chair on a ramp going into the clouds. We did a graduated matte running the length of the ramp so it loses contrast as it goes away continuously. We used different filters cut up in strips and shot out of focus so they produced a gradation: it gets lighter as it got further away. The first time the shot was done, it just stood out too clearly and it looked silly. People don't like degrading objects they've worked on. Model makers are so proud of their work they want to see it. If you degrade it, it looks more real."

The fabulous attention to detail eclipsed the thematic content for some audiences, who were overwhelmed by the visuals. What is the point of Gilliam's dystopian view of the future? "It was originally going to be called THE MINISTRY," he explained. "It was really about how organizations become self-serving organisms that will do anything to keep themselves alive. Then you mix into that things like The Peter Principle, which is that people are promoted to a position above their capabilities and there they stay. Therefore, organizations are always peopled by employees that are bad at the job they're doing. I was keen on Sam being a character who was wise, who avoided being promoted beyond his capabilities, who in fact did just the opposite. He worked *below* his capabilities, because it bought him lots of free time to dream and fantasize, not taking responsibility for the organization. It was about the way organizations work, and the people within them. In the midst of that is this guy, the smart one, who chooses not to get involved and, unfortunately, gets involved by falling in love. Falling in love humanizes him and ultimately destroys him. Sam is actually tortured at the end because he chose not to take responsibility for his actions.

"Sam is a real interesting character," Gilliam added. "He becomes a hero at the end by killing his girl—as far as the system is concerned. He doesn't have a sword and wings, but he can operate computers. Her character was originally supposed to be much more elaborate, larger. Again, she was smart. Rather than taking a job at an office, she had chosen to drive a truck, because she's free most of the time, on her own. She was a very isolated person, because she didn't want to get involved, either. They were both living in their own worlds and they get together. In the finished film, she's basically cut down to looking like a figment of his imagination, but that wasn't supposed to be that way; it just worked out that way."

Ultimately, Gilliam sees his film as an indictment of people who refuse to take responsibility for the actions of the system in which they work and live. "They want to blame the system," he explained. "They want to blame somebody else. You get all the goodies from the system, the technology and the toys, but you're attached by these great umbilical ducts to the system. There was an image that I didn't get in the film, the Buttles' home. It was way out in this desolate countryside, but it had this huge umbilical cable line, about four feet wide, extending across the desert. It was this thing about people being connected to a system. I remember being in Chicago, at the University there, giving a lecture, and all these kids were asking why there was so much wiring and ducts. Don't they realize that the room they're sitting in is completely surrounded by cables and wires? All that you see is just a thin facade. The other side is this very complicated bit of wiring, hooking you into the network. We were talking about the explosions, and I said, 'It isn't just dynamite. Systems go bang.' They didn't quite buy all that. We walked out, and what was on the television? The Challenger exploding. I said, 'That's what I'm talking about, folks.'"

Unfortunately, all of this was lost on a number of viewers, particularly those at Universal Studios. The completed film was not to the liking of Sid Sheinberg, who objected to the pessimistic tone of the climax, and Gilliam lost his final cut privilege when he delivered a film in excess of the 125-minute limit specified in the contract. Fox went ahead and released the long version in Europe, but Universal stuck to its guns, claiming that BRAZIL in its present form had major marketing drawbacks. The dispute later escalated to include the very content of the story. "Universal tried to use the length clause as a way of changing the film itself," Gilliam pointed out. "At first, the ending seemed to be what the controversy was about. But that wasn't really the problem. It was the spirit of the film they objected to. They wanted an up ending, but the ending is the most powerful thing about the film. To change that would have altered the entire concept. They went from length, to ending, to entire film as being the problem."

In their attempt to create a "more accessible" movie, Universal decided to re-edit BRAZIL, lopping off the horrifying coda in which the audience discovers that Sam's 'rescue' is merely a delusion generated as a psychological defense while he's being tortured. Gilliam was appalled at the idea. "They tried to pressure me into cooperating," he said. "The

"TIME BANDITS was completely a commercial idea, conceived with the entire family in mind. Adults wouldn't be embarrassed, and kids wouldn't be bored."

The Time Bandits display the map of Creation that reveals holes in time.

The Many Faces of Gilliam: the rich American twit in MEANING OF LIFE.

Gilliam directs Katherine Helmond and Peter Vaughn in TIME BANDITS.

film has an ending that was right for that piece. You can't invent a world like that and not be consistent."

Ironically, it was precisely this "lack of consistency" that was one of Gilliam's inspirations for his film. "BRAZIL was a reaction to a lot of Hollywood films, especially BLADE RUNNER," he said of trying to force happy endings where they don't fit. "It was a wonderful film, and then at the end it just says, 'Fuck all of you. We're going to have a happy ending.' The ending was appalling! You create an android and tell the viewer that they all have limited life spans; then at the end, it's 'Oh, but this is one that doesn't.' That's the kind of thing that drives me crazy. Let's at least be consistent, true to the piece. That's what I was trying to do with BRAZIL."

While this dispute was going on, the film was earning kudos overseas, although some critics were bothered by the fact that the film switched midstream from broad satire to a more solemn social relevance. Pryce feels that is one of BRAZIL's strengths. "Like most drama," he pointed out, "you seduce people in the beginning and then wallop them over the head. But Terry keeps it going throughout the film: niceness—humor—shock. In fact, the most brutal scene occurs very early on, when Buttle is arrested. I think that's one of the ultimate nightmares, to be rudely awakened by these black faceless masks, smashing their way into your home and throwing a harness on you."

Ultimately, while trying to coerce Sheinberg into releasing his movie, the outspoken Gilliam publicly attacked the studio chief to the point where he couldn't afford to back down. "It became a question of showing us who the boss is," Gilliam recalled. "Even Spielberg tried to help me, but I don't think he succeeded. I hit too many nerves with Sid. As people rise in the studio system, great chunks of their brains get cut away. It became a gauntlet with Universal—I had to get through them to reach the public."

Gilliam went so far as to buy a full-page ad in the October 2, 1985 issue of *Daily Variety*, asking Sheinberg: "When are you going to release my film, BRAZIL?" "There was one point when it became quite clear, as far as Universal was concerned, that it wasn't going to be released here [in America]," Pryce said. "I'm afraid my nature is such that I was resigned to it. I had to get on with something else. Although I shared Terry's anxiety and frustration, all I could do was sympathize. I felt quite impotent: It's one thing to make all sorts of threats like Terry, but in this situation, my strength was minimized. All I could do was support Terry by saying that if we didn't get the version we wanted, then I didn't want to cooperate with the film and would remove my name if at all possible."

Although Gilliam won in the end, the studio was still not very supportive. Pryce had to fly (sans wings) to America at his own expense in order to discuss the film with the press. At the time, he said of his dealings with Universal: "I'm here now against the wishes of Universal; they're still not supporting the film. Universal's lack of cooperation seems to indicate that they would like to be justified in maintaining their stance. If the film died, I think they would be very happy: they'd adopt an 'I told you so' attitude.' When the L.A. critics gave it their best film award, it must have been a slap in the face to Sid Sheinberg. He said the film was unshowable, yet there were people packing the cinemas every night to see it."

The studio's lack of support did prove to be a self-fulfilling prophecy: BRAZIL failed to equal or even approach the receipts of TIME BANDITS. "If you don't release a film properly, you don't make money," said the director. "It's never bothered me if they don't make money. It's pathetic at the moment the way America has become obsessed with money-making films. Every week in the newspapers—even the *New York Times*—are the grosses. The American people have been trained to believe that money means quality, and that's what really scares me about printing box-office grosses. On one hand, we're in a business. Films need to make money, or they shouldn't lose *big* money. But the perception is really skewed, because people don't understand what the numbers really mean.

"When we did the early Python films, we didn't have any reputation in Hollywood, even though we made them for very little money, and they did very good business. Also, we owned them. Yet by Hollywood standards, they were not making big money. So they weren't interested in us, but I couldn't think of anything better than being completely free to do whatever we wanted to do, making films that we liked making, and making money on them. All I ask of the studio system is that it do what the publishing industry does: You have people like Stephen King who sell tons of books, but the publishers also print books by small-time poets and such. Make your DIE HARDs and JURASSIC PARKs, but save a place for the poets and people who are doing something different."

In TIME BANDITS, a simple wide angle lens creates a convincing giant.

Gilliam felt he had made a political mistake by agreeing to the length provision added to the BRAZIL contract—which he never would have accepted, had he known the fiasco that would result. He was more careful when signing contracts for his next project, a $30 million version of the old German fantasy THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN.

"I'm never going to put a time clause in a contract," he said. "I'm not going to get caught on anything. All they need is one little thing, and they'll nail you. Once you reach a certain level, the belief is that the only way you can recoup your money is to have a normal success as opposed to an abnormal one."

BARON MUNCHAUSEN completed the trilogy Gilliam began with TIME BANDITS. "I've called Munchausen the fourth part of the trilogy just to confuse people," the director joked. The eponymous Baron (played by John Neville) is another Gilliam protagonist who readily crosses the line between fantasy and reality, but he is a more adventurous and colorful and heroic character (at least to hear him to tell it) than the passive Sam Lowry. Also, as in TIME BANDITS, he is accompanied by a youngster,

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GAMERA

GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE

The former Godzilla wannabe finally earns some respect.

By Steve Ryfle

Breathing fire and emitting his trademark whiny roar, Gamera burst onto the *kaiju eiga* (Japanese for "monster movie") scene in GAMMERA, THE INVINCIBLE (1965). Though launched by Daiei Co. Ltd. to cash in on the popularity of rival Toho Studio's Godzilla movies, the titanic turtle differed from his reptilian rival in that he always had a soft spot for children: in the eight installments of the original series, the superturtle saved kiddies from rival monsters and worked with them to outsmart pesky alien invaders. The GAMERA movies (the name was shorted by one 'm' for the sequels) were full of visible wires, silly stories, and bad acting, and never matched those of Godzilla & Co. In short, this monster has always been good for a few laughs, but he's never deserved serious consideration.

Until now, that is. Daiei has revived the giant turtle in the surprisingly excellent GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE—a film so good that it is guaranteed to erase your worst memories of the original series.

In a disgusting bit of black humor, an ornithologist examines the stool of Gamera's giant flying adversary Gyaos, to check for human remains.

Strangely enough, it was not Gamera that Daiei originally hoped to revive when considering re-entering the giant monster business, but Majin, the giant stone Samurai that appeared in a trio of films (MAJIN, THE RETURN OF GIANT MAJIN and MAJIN STRIKES AGAIN) in 1966. However, market research showed Japanese filmgoers had more of a yen for Gamera, so it was decided to bring the big turtle back for a 30th anniversary film in 1995.

At first, the studio brought in Niisan Takahashi, who had penned the original series. His script was ultimately rejected precisely because of its emphasis on children's entertainment. The project really began to take shape early in 1993, after Daiei passed over original series director Noriaki Yuasa in favor of Shusuke Kaneko, a popular director of comedies who began his career in the mid-1980s helming soft-core porno films, and more recently had won praise for THE SUMMER VACATION OF 1999. Kaneko had long wanted to direct a kaiju film, and was involved in the early planning stages of ULTRA Q: THE MOVIE (1989), a feature adaptation of Tsuburaya Productions' 1960s TV series. Kaneko was influenced as a child by the original GODZILLA (1954, as seen in Japan without Raymond Burr), a film that uses powerful imagery to convey horror and human drama alike.

Recruited to write the script was Kazunari Ito, noted for his work on PATLABOR, the popular animated series about futuristic robots. Ito's screenplay underwent six revisions before production began. The changes involved reducing the number of Gyaos monsters for budgetary reasons and toning down the graphic violence (including a scene wherein a female Gyaos mates with a male, then eats him!). Director Kaneko and Ito had worked together previously, on an installment in the Brian Yuzna-produced trilogy, NECRONOMICON.

First-time special-effects director Shinji Higuchi was a rising talent who had drawn story boards for several Japanese fantasy films and animation projects when he was hired in September 1993 to serve as the chief creature designer for the Gamera project. Although never a big fan of the original series, he was so impressed by Ito's script that he pushed hard for the coveted job. Despite his youth (he is 29), the studio entrusted the project to Higuchi, who proved to have a vision and imagination that stretches the boundaries of the film's $4.5 million budget.

"I didn't have much experience, and I probably made unreasonable demands of everybody on the crew, but they worked really hard for me and they did more than what I asked of them," Higuchi said in an interview for a video documentary released in Japan on the making of the film. As a child, Higuchi was weaned on the usual Toho special effects films of the '60s and '70s, but he preferred those that were scary, like the Japanese disaster epic SUBMERSION OF JAPAN (1973, known in the U.S. as TIDAL WAVE, starring Lorne Green). Assisted by Japanese animation artist Masahiro Maira, Higuchi worked on the monster designs from October to December 1993 and produced a Gamera unlike the previous incarnation. With smaller eyes and a more dinosaur-like appearance, the monster resembled a giant sea turtle, but the studio wanted to preserve Gamera's friendly image. Higuchi's monster ended up being true to the original yet more believable (if a giant turtle can *ever* be believable). "Monster movies are supposed to bring to life the monsters you don't see in ordinary life, to make them appear in front of you all of a sudden," Higuchi said. "That's the philosophy of this movie."

Above: Gyaos, Gamera's winged adversary, with no apologies to Toho. Inset: Gamera, the flying turtle, whose powers are explained in the new film as the genetic experiments of a lost civilization.

Though once one of Japan's most prolific movie studios, Daiei today has limited production facilities. Thus, the monsters' rampages through miniature sets of Fukuoka, Tokyo, and Mt. Fuji were filmed on a small sound stage rented on the Toho lot in Setagaya. Some miniature setups were constructed outdoors and filmed with natural sky, eliminating the need for skyscape backdrops that have marred this type of film. Budget constraints also forced Higuchi to use the man-in-suit technique that is the hallmark of Japanese special effects, but the new Gamera suit is finely detailed, with a life-like leathery green-gray skin and dark reptilian eyes. The suit was made lighter and easier for the actor inside to maneuver than Toho's Godzilla suits, which are made of a reinforced latex and weigh upwards of 175 pounds (and even more when they soak up water during ocean scenes). In addition to the suit, a cable-controlled mechanical upper-half of the monster with articulated eyes and mouth, constructed in the same scale as the suit and matching it perfectly, was used for close-ups.

GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE marks the first time a woman has portrayed a *kaiju*, as actress Yumi Kamiyama wore the suit that brought the adult Gyaos to life in the final reel. The creature was based on the original from RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS (1967, a.k.a. GAMERA VS. GYAOS), but the new beast—deep red-brown in color, with the appearance of a fleshy exoskeleton—is a 100-percent improvement over the original, which looked like what it was: an asphyxiating latex suit. Some close-ups betray the fact that hand puppets were used, but most of the Gyaos effects are strong, with imaginative touches (such as a close-up on Gyaos' feet as it lands or the monster's aerodynamic flight posture) helping to create a strong illusion of a giant predator-bird. In most *kaiju* movies, the Japanese simply regard giant monsters as a fact of life; here the mood is darker, with Gyaos cast as a sheer terror that hungers for human flesh. Another plus is the camera work, which uses low angles to make the monsters look truly gigantic. "Mr. Kaneko and Mr. Higuchi discussed where to set the point of view, and they decided on the human point of view," special effects cameraman Hiroshi Kidokoro said in the making-of documentary. "We didn't want something in between what the monsters see and what people see."

This is also the first Japanese monster movie to feature a considerable number of shots using computer-generated animation. Yoshishige Matsuro of the NHK CG Room in Tokyo created the new effects for Gamera's fiery breath and Gyaos' supersonic ray beam. The Gamera of old used to breathe a stream of real fire, created via a flame-throwing device installed in the mouth of the suit, but no more. Now the monster spits huge "plasma fireballs" that stream across the screen and hit their target with explosive force. And Gyaos' simple, optically animated ray was dropped in favor of a high-pitched howl that oscillates and focuses into an energy beam. CGI was also used for the new rendition of Gamera in flight, which looks more like a hyperfast UFO than the flying frisbee of yore. In addition, computer graphics created by Tokyo based Light House were utilized for the smart-missiles and bombs the military employs to knock Gamera out of the sky and pummel him on the ground.

The finished film was released in Japan in March 1995, but it was shown in only a limited number of cinemas, perhaps because Toho (which distributed the film) feared it might upstage its own recent (and inferior) GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA. It was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in May, and an English-subtitled version had a special one-week run at a Dallas, Texas theater in June. Although there have been rumors of additional regional play dates, it seems mostly likely the film's only national release in the U.S. will be direct-to-video. That would be a shame. This is probably the best Japanese monster movie since the classic DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (1968); and, although no one in tinseltown would ever admit it, it has more sheer excitement than much of the science fiction produced in Hollywood these days. □

Gamera's pursuit of Gayos cuts a destructive swath through downtown Tokyo.

Stories of Childho

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

By Mikita Brottman

It is generally agreed that fairy tales have much to teach their readers about the conditions of human consciousness, about the inner problems of human beings, and about the right solutions to their predicaments. Through its unambivalent plots and archetypal polarization of human characteristics, the fairy tale both entertains the child, enlightens him about himself, and fosters his personality in development. In its narrative and allegorical capacities, the fairy tale, it has been claimed, enriches the child's existence in a multitude of diverse ways.

In Freudian terms, the importance of the fairy tale relates to the fact that such stories unfold within an animistic universe, governed by the belief that spirits, good and bad, inhabit all things and that thoughts and wishes are all-powerful over physical reality. Animism is the force that forges the mind of the child, and also the neurotic, and the primitive incarnations of all cultures. Sigmund Freud argues that none of us has passed through this animistic stage of development without unconsciously retaining certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves in those feelings of fear and terror referred to as versions of the uncanny: This is the symbolic structure linking the fairy tale with the horror film. The fairy tale takes place in a primitive, animistic universe ruled by spirits and magic; the horror film also gives us glimpses of this animistic state of mind but in a repressed, unconscious form and thus recognizable only as terrifying, bewildering, and often malefic.

Most traditional horror films share the functions of the fairy tale in that they serve to teach their mainly teenaged audiences of the dangerous consequences of inappropriate sexual (and other) behavior, thereby serving as a ritual process of acculturation for the modern adolescent, just as the fairy tale helps the child to come to terms with many of the psychological problems of growing up. Most horror films, by affording their audience uncanny glimpses of the fairy tale's animistic universe, lead them through the dangers of the adolescent sexual predicament, reinforcing the culture's taboos in a ritual display of rule breaking.

Cathy Burns in Tobe Hooper's original film: the sacrifice of children inverts the regenerative ritual of cannibalism—it is empty of any kind of cultural signification.

Occasionally, and often accidentally, films are made that transgress the structures and traditions of a genre, sometimes with notorious consequences. Such a film is Tobe Hooper's THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE (1977), in which a sustained inversion of the symbolic rituals and motifs of the fairy tale creates an apocalyptic narrative of negativity and destruction, wholly unredeemed by any single element of plot, mood or characterization. Through its systematic inversion of the fairy tale structure, CHAINSAW functions not, as most horror films, to acculturate its adolescent audience into the difficulties of adulthood and the inconsistencies of human consciousness, but serves instead to mislead, misdirect and confuse its audience in a bewildering nightmare of violence and bloodshed.

Like many horror films, the basic narrative structure of CHAINSAW has elements in common with a number of popular fairy tales. It is not difficult to spot structural parallels with *Jack and the Beanstalk* (the ascent into a secret world, ruled by an ogre; the descent back into the "real" world, given chase by the axe-wielding giant); *Goldilocks* (the golden-haired girl encountering a bestial family sitting round their table at dinner), *Beauty and the Beast* (the beautiful daughter "stolen" by the ugly beast and dragged off into his own world); *Bluebeard* (the "dreadful room" with its terrible secret); *Little Red Riding Hood* (the girl lured into the house by a monster in disguise): and, perhaps most of all, *Hansel and Gretel* (children lost in the woods, stumbling across an attractive house owned by a cannibalistic fiend who kidnaps them and attempts to use them for food).

Other elements of the film's structure incorporate a number of random fairy tale symbols and motifs: the forest, the broomstick, the woodcutter's axe, lost children, the child in a sack, the bucket, the dinner table, the farm, cows, chickens and pigs, the giant, grandparents, the disguise, the "escape" back into the "real" world at sunrise. And just as the lost children comprise one family group—two young couples and a brother and sister—the fairy tale family is paralleled by the wizened and macabre family of men: Grandpa (virtually a corpse), Grandma (actually a corpse), their dog (mummified), Father (the garage owner), Leatherface (the eldest son), and the young Hitchhiker.

From the very opening of the film, there are hints of anarchy and disorder; Sally tries to restore a sense of stability, but she cannot even locate her grandfather's grave. By the time of her capture, the narrative has descended into a dark carnival of chaos and hysteria. Order has been abandoned; the potential violence of the dinner party recurrently relapses into absurdity as Grandpa, too weak to grasp the hammer, is unable to deliver his famous killing blow. All dialogue is drowned out by Sally's uncontrolled screaming, which does not abate as the film ends but transforms into hysterical laughter. Narrative stability evaporates from the film's outset, when the radio report about the grave robbings diverts Sally and her friends from whatever trip they were planning to take on that "idyllic summer afternoon" and leads them instead into the Other

od and Chainsaws

overturns its fairy tale conventions.

film, the unconscious of the traditional horror film narrative.

The fairy tale is controlled by a mythic order and a ritual narrative script. The story of *Hansel and Gretel*, for example, gives body to the child's anxieties about abandonment, separation anxiety, being deserted or devoured, suffering from starvation or being punished for oral greediness. But the children are victorious in the end, when Gretel achieves freedom and independence for both, and the witch is utterly defeated. Most horror films share the positive, pragmatic functions of the fairy tale in that when they do allow unconscious material to come to awareness and work itself through in our imaginations—its potential for causing harm is greatly reduced. As with the fairy tale, the traditional horror film generally works to serve positive acculturating purposes.

Tobe Hooper's film inverts this mythic order and upsets the ritual narrative script—and on a cosmic level. The inverted fairy tale narrative is not simply a tale of personal tragedy, but like all fairy tales—works to universal dimensions. This apocalyptic sentiment is suggested first by the film's "documentary" aspect. On one level at least, the film is meant to be approached as a "true story," and has many of the stylistics of the documentary, such as the opening "explanation" and the specification of an exact date printed on the screen ("August 18, 1973"). CHAINSAW is compelled to repeat a fixation on a non-regenerative apocalypse, an end to history, a cosmic destruction. Sally's escape is not a forestalling of the apocalypse, but simply a postponement of the end of the ritual violence. Her escape signifies a return to the cycle of horror, never to be redeemed by any sense of an ending.

CHAINSAW disorients and overwhelms the viewer by refusing to provide expected, reassuring thematic material: for example, Leatherface is the antithesis of the archetypal image of the Wise Old Man, corrupt and polluting, an earth-bound beast. Leatherface III (above) and Hooper's original (below).

The mythic dimensions of Hooper's film are constituted by four separate groups of images. Firstly, elemental images of solar fire during the opening credits are counterbalanced by visions of a huge moon, then again, at dawn, further images of a gigantic, blazing sun. These images are complemented by the lunar symbol smeared in blood on the side of the terrible house and on the van by Hitchhiker, which starts to make Franklyn nervous. Secondly, the uses of totemism as an iconographic emblem brings a cosmic element to the narrative in the opening shots of the exhumed corpses, propped into bizarre tableaux, Leatherface's mask of human skin, and the symbolic resonance provided by the recurrence of bones, teeth, skulls and other human offal. Thirdly, a prescient chorus to the drama takes the form of an old laughing drunk in the cemetary. "Things happen hereabouts," he tells the teenagers. "I see things. You think it's just an old man talking. Them that laughs at an old man knows better." This choric warning is echoed by a macabre series of images (a dead armadillo lies on its back in the road; a huge hornet's nest has been built in the corner of the room in the

Leatherface (Robert Jacks) returns in the latest installment of the steadily degenerating series.

THE RETURN OF THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Writer-director: Kim Henkel. A Return Productions Presentation, 102 mins, 1995. With: Robert Jacks, Renne Zellweger, Matthew McConaughey, Tony Perenski, Joe Stevens.

A sad phenomenon occurring all too often of late in the realm of *cinefantastique* is continuing series that end up imitating their own imitators. Example: HALLOWEEN (1978) launched the slasher cycle of the early '80s, earning a certain critical respect with its suspenseful, suggestive approach to horror; but last year's HALLOWEEN: THE CURSE OF MICHAEL MYERS is virtually indistinguishable in approach from any post-FRIDAY THE 13TH rip-off.

Sadly, the same can pretty much be said of Kim Henkel's RETURN OF THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE. Virtually a remake of its famous progenitor, the film nevertheless echoes many intervening films with its opening set-up: a group of high school teens on prom night. Prom night? Wasn't there even a film by that name? This "new" element grafted onto the CHAINSAW franchise reduces the latest installment to the level of a weary imitator.

In a way, that's no surprise, because when you stop to think about it, what more can you do with a CHAINSAW film? The original had going for it the shock value of its ferocious originality, but once that's gone, there's little left for sequels. Tobe Hooper realized this when he turned CHAINSAW 2 into a big (and very funny) joke, for which the CHAINSAW purists have never forgiven him. LEATHERFACE made the mistake of jump-starting the series with a new chainsaw family, as if starting from scratch, and RETURN magnifies the mistake by not only giving us a new family but recreating many of the structural motifs of the original. The result is stupifyingly predictable and boring, with nothing to recommend it in terms of plot, characters, or even visceral thrills. If you're a fan, just rent the original again. ○ **Jay Stevenson**

"Please God—no more CHAINSAW sequels!"

old house where Sally used to stay, before her grandmother died), and an apocalyptic series of disasters is reported on the radio news. Finally, Pam spends the journey reading horoscopes aloud from an astrological magazine—and the forecast, as she warns her friends, is far from auspicious. Saturn is in retrograde, its powers of malefluence increased. Franklin's horoscope forecasts "a disturbing and unpredictable day." Sally's is even worse: "there are moments when you can't believe what's happening to you is really true. Pinch yourself and you might find out that it is."

The traditional fairy tale is based on a narrative structure composed of symbolic and iconographic archetypes which are, according to Carl Jung, fundamentally universal, since the basic essentials of human consciousness are held in common by all mankind. Perhaps the best known and most important fairy tale archetype is the Wise Old Man, the benevolent Father who in some fairy tales takes the form of the good Grandfather, the Wizard or the Wise King, giver of judgment and knowledge, sharer of wisdom. According to Jung, the figure of the Wise Old Man represents "the factor of intelligence and knowledge" or "superior insight." The counterpart to this pillar of wisdom in CHAINSAW is the mute, axe-wielding Leatherface, the Wise Old Man's devilish shadow. With his huge, bloated body, his tangled curly hair, his leather apron and his mask made from pieces of human skin, Leatherface communicates only through a series of farmyard grunts. After the murder of Jerry, he runs off swinging his meat cleaver and squealing like a pig. Instead of standing as the source of knowledge and superior wisdom, Leatherface is corrupt and polluting, an earth-bound beast wrapped in human skin.

A second recurrent archetypal element of the fairy tale is the house, the rooms inside the house, and their internal decorations. Houses—either the family house or an isolated house discovered in the middle of a forest—play a significant part in many of the best-known folk tales.

Two houses are featured in CHAINSAW—the dilapidated cottage owned by Sally and Franklin's grandparents, and the house of horrors inhabited by the family of slaughterers. The latter, like most fairy tale houses, is attractive and welcoming from the outside, with a brightly-lit porch, swing-chair, and the possibility of a petrol supply. Inside, however, the house is almost totally in shadow. Downstairs, it has been divided into two sections; a thick steel door separates the front room and hallway from the slaughterhouse at the back. The front room is decorated with a gruesome selection of human offal; the floor is scattered with bones; skulls and more bones hang suspended from the ceiling; feathers and human teeth lie on the ground; sculptures made from skulls and jawbones are mounted at

The aged Grandpa—allegedly, the "best killer"—can't even lift a hammer to kill Sally, but revives upon tasting blood sucked from her finger.

the windows; the corners of the room are covered in cobwebs and, hanging from the middle of the ceiling, a huge chicken is stuffed into a tiny cage. Outside in the yard, tin cans, cups and pieces of metal are strung from the bushes and trees. Elsewhere, a pig squeals constantly.

Upstairs in the attic (which is also used as the dining room), the main decoration consists of the mummified corpses of Grandma and Grandpa (who revives upon tasting fresh blood sucked from Sally's slit finger, in a grotesque echo of Hitchhiker's gleeful self-mutilation in the van), and the stuffed corpse of their dog. This is the room in which the armchairs, quite literally, have human arms. During the dinner party scene, the dinner table is festooned with bones, skulls, scalps and other graveyard detritus, around which buzz a number of flies. This parody of the fairy tale feast is the film's most protracted and frightening sequence. Leatherface is smartened up for the occasion in evening dress and black tie, and keeps leaning over to peer at Sally through his mask. The rest of the family all sit round in their allotted, neatly-laid places and whoop, cry and gibber in a grotesque parody of Sally's terrified screams. Eventually Grandpa, "the best" killer, is brought out to deal the blow: Sally is undone from her chair and led to kneel at his feet with her head over a bucket.

According to Jung, the motif of the house in fairy tales stands for the unavoidable entrapment of our minds in archetypal relationships and modes of thought. The house is the central image of the "residues and traces" of a previous animistic world-view, with the motif of the forbidden room connoting sexual knowledge. The myster-

ious house in CHAINSAW is not a house of life and regeneration but a contaminating house of premature death.

In the fairy tale, human relics are associated with the regenerative properties of the corpse, and other inanimate objects are given life by spirits and magic, as is usual in the animate universe. Bruno Bettelheim points out that the fairy tale hero is helped by being in touch with primitive things—a tree, an animal, nature—as the child feels more in touch with these things than most adults do. In *Beauty and the Beast*, the human element attributed to inanimate objects allows Beauty to befriend them, and they comfort her while she is away from her sisters and her father.

As fairy tales do for children, traditional horror films provide positive acculturating experiences for teenagers. CHAINSAW director Tobe Hooper inverts this mythic order throughout his film.

This symbolic process is again inverted in CHAINSAW. Here, rather than inanimate objects having special, magical powers of life, even living things are reduced to mere objects or superficies, as in the armchair made out of human arms, and the table ornaments composed of human remains. Instead of imagining a world animated by spiritual magic as in childhood and primitive cultures, CHAINSAW presents a world not only antipathetic to "normality," but forged from an antipathy finally to life itself, showing life drained of all value: an ultimate, apocalyptic threat to the vital principle.

Most fairy tales deal in one way or another with family relationships and the transition of power and authority through generations. For example, many stories center around a family where one of the parents is either an "evil" substitute, or else missing completely. Others begin with the death of a mother or father, which creates a number of ongoing problems, just as it does in real life. Yet other fairy stories, as Bettelheim notes, tell about an aging parent who decides that the time has come to let the new generation take over. But before this can happen, the successor has to prove himself capable and worthy.

CHAINSAW presents us with two separate families: the "good" family of children, and their evil counterparts. The children are closely interlinked: Kirk and Pam are a couple, Sally and Jerry are a couple, and Franklyn is Sally's brother. There are also references to Sally and Franklyn's father, their grandparents, and their uncle. It is not clear quite to what extent the family of slaughterers are related to one another, since there are no female members of the family (with the exception of Grandma, now a corpse). Basically, the males of the family are all retired (but still practicing) slaughterhouse workers, made redundant by the mechanization of the local slaughterhouse, who have decided to use their talents on human prey ("a whole family of Draculas!" exclaims Franklyn in the van). Hitchhiker, the youth of the family, seems to be the grave robber, responsible for the macabre series of exhumations reported on the local radio. Leatherface, his older brother, follows in the steps of his grandfather as the family butcher of carcasses, and Father, the garage owner, is "nothing but the cook," who sells human barbecue at his roadside store.

The death of the parent or the displacement of their power in the fairy tale not only helps the child come to terms with death, especially the anticipated future death of the parent, but also dramatizes the natural transition of power and authority from generation to generation, thereby exploring the eventual takeover of the new age. In CHAINSAW, however, this transition is blocked and inverted: traditional values are refuted and negated by monstrous parent figures that destroy children. Robin Wood has noted how the "terrible house" of the chainsaw family signifies "the dead weight of the past crushing the light of the younger generations, an obliteration that has no redeeming or regenerative qualities whatsoever."

The final fairy tale motif mocked and inverted by CHAINSAW's apocalyptic economy is that of cannibalism. In some fairy tales, the threat of cannibalism is modified into a threat of being devoured by humanesque characters in animal form. In others, cannibalism is threatened directly, although the threat is never carried out—at least, never upon the tale's protagonists. Like many forms of death and violence in the fairy tale, cannibalism seems to be generally associated with regenerative functions. The threat of cannibalism helps the child come to terms with his fears of punishment for oral greediness and—correspondingly—his own fear of being devoured or "swallowed up" by the parent.

In CHAINSAW, however, the cannibalism is gratuitous and functionless. Hitchhiker's graphic description of the making of head cheese leads to an act of self-mutilation that parodies this family's means of sustaining and nourishing itself by slaughtering people and robbing graves, then either consuming the bodies themselves, or selling them off as barbecue. Pam's body is strung up on a meat hook, and then transferred to the freezer; Jerry and Kirk are both killed with a meat-cleaver. The sacrifice of these children inverts the regenerative ritual of cannibalism: it is empty of any kind of cultural or pragmatic signification in the sense usually associated with collective violence and other acts of ritual aggression.

In fairy tales, this kind of terrible punishment is not a deterrent to crime so much as a means of persuading the child that crime does not pay. Morality is promoted not through the fact that virtue always wins out in the end, but because the bad person always loses and because the hero is most attractive to the child. In CHAINSAW, however, humanity is completely powerless, and the annihilation is complete. There are no heroes or heroines, only victims and villains. In this fairy tale there are no clues, no magic passwords, no treasures to rescue or battles to fight because this is not a narrative governed by any logical order. Neither victims nor slaughterers have any kind of control over themselves or each other, and this lack of control is cosmic and universal. Malevolent predictions come true, suggesting that our defense against horror is finally subject to the forces of an arbitrary fate. CHAINSAW is perhaps one of the only stories of true horror that our culture has produced. The film's narrative disorder, illogical sequences of action and apocalyptic sense of destruction are ritualistic, but without the regenerative or collective functions generally associated with ritualized violence. A fairy tale which misleads, bewilders, confuses and ultimately delivers the expectation of defeat is a dangerous story indeed. □

Sympathy For The Devil

Contemporary Horror and the Transformation of the Monstrous

By Patricia Moir

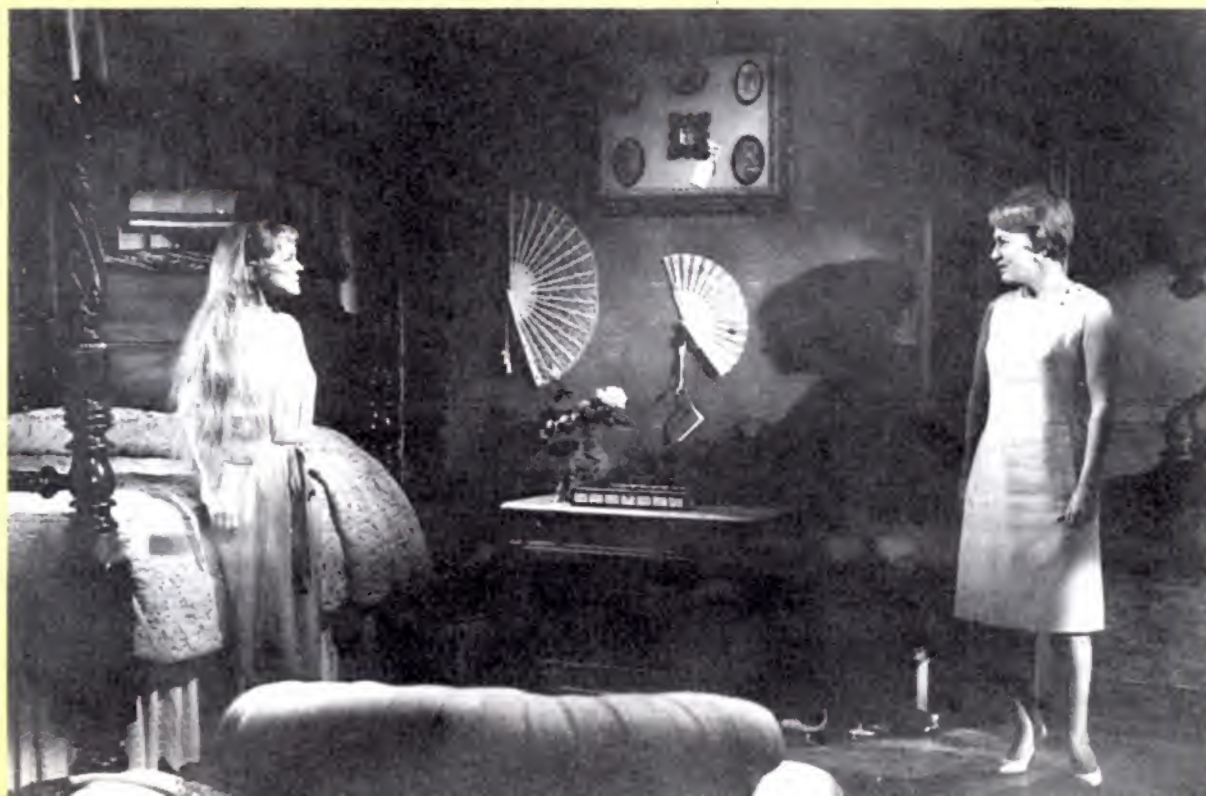
For the better part of recorded history, human beings have struggled to define the nature of the world in which they live in terms of binaries—balanced and opposing forces at the extremes of human experience. Dark and light, good and evil, normality and monstrosity are concepts that have allowed us to develop moral codes, judicial systems, and a general consensus about what constitutes desirable social conduct. But the last hundred years have seen a growing dissatisfaction with previously unquestioned assumptions. Darwinism, psychoanalytic theory, Marxism, feminism, and the unprecedented horrors of World War I all challenged accepted concepts of normality and raised questions about the stability of the accepted world order.

The birth of the horror film coincided, roughly, with the birth of the 20th century and, as the ideas of linguists, philosophers, psychiatrists and artists filtered into the popular consciousness, horror films began to reflect a general uneasiness with simplistic definitions of the normal. Freudian theory did irreparable damage to the notion that evil was an external force to be fought and destroyed; if evil resided within all of us, then "normal" and "abnormal" became relative terms with no clearly fixed meanings. The monstrous—that which threatened the normal—was not a universal constant, but a response to and a creation of life experiences. In earlier times, monstrosity was seen as an omen of impending supernatural chaos; in the 20th century, monstrosity became a symptom, not of Evil, but of evils—unhealthy social and political circumstances. While monsters might claim victims, they were also victims themselves.

Thus, early horror films, while still for the most part reflecting a relatively conservative world view, began to broaden our definitions of both normality and monstrosity. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are simply points on a continuum. Frankenstein's creation, while unquestionably dangerous, shows more compassion than his maker. Vampires have conventionally been portrayed as more noble, elegant, and attractive than their pursuers. The Phantom of the Paris Opera is a tragic madman who pursues an abnormal course only after the normal is denied him. And King Kong is less monster than misfit.

These early examinations of the nature of order and morality remained tentative for several decades; the Great Depression and World War II created a demand for a simple, comforting idealism to offset the chaos of everyday life. Evils and enemies were clearly drawn and unambiguous. But with the 50s and the restoration of a prosperous social order, the old debates, which had continued to develop in intellectual circles, once again arose in the popular media. The idea that monsters were phenomena internal to our society and our selves inspired dozens of movies about the disastrous consequences of flawed intentions: THEM, TARANTULA, THE DEADLY MANTIS, and a host of other films depicted monsters as the amoral products of an immoral social or political establishment whose stated intentions contradicted its self-serving agenda. In THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, the external "threat" possesses a "normal" morality in contrast to that of its supposed "victims;" the abnormality is revealed within the accustomed and accepted order of the human world. But it was in 1960 that the age of truly contemporary horror began. Alfred Hitchcock's PSYCHO, with its sympathetic portrayal of the deadly yet curiously ineffectual Norman Bates, subverted audi-

In HUSH, HUSH SWEET CHARLOTTE, Bette Davis plays a woman perceived as monstrous by others due to criminal excesses of passion, but her monstrosity is entirely a matter of perception.



Although traditionally figures of Evil, Vampires have frequently been portrayed sympathetically or at least ambiguously, as creatures with their own social and moral codes of conduct—for example, in INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE.

ence expectations with its unconventional narrative structure and characterizations and forever changed the face of the modern horror film.

Norman, as played by Anthony Perkins, is a complex and appealing character whose victimization at the whims of his murderously insane "mother" places him toward the "normal" end of the moral continuum. The fact that he is aware of mother's crimes and conceals them from the authorities is perceived not as evil complicity, but as a desperate attempt to preserve order in the face of chaos. His motives appear to be at least as healthy as those of adulteress/thief Marion Crane, and his remorse every bit as genuine. When Norman is revealed to be, in fact, the very monster he (and the audience) fears, the good-evil binary is shattered. Who is the monster, and who the victim? Has Norman killed his innocent mother? Was she responsible for creating his psychosis? Is Norman one person, or two?

Sequels to PSYCHO answer these questions by clarifying Norman's past and describing his futile attempts to overcome the influences that threaten his sanity. Mother is vanquished, only to be replaced by the vengeful Lila Crane. While these sequels tie up the loose narrative ends left at the close of the first film, they cannot answer the more fundamental questions which continue to haunt the viewer. Norman is definitely abnormal, but the circumstances of his madness suggest that normality does not exist at all. Is he more or less monstrous than the apparently normal women who deliberately set out to destroy him?

Following PSYCHO, horror films' monsters become increasingly sympathetic, and binary divisions increasingly fluid and arbitrary. Both villains and victims appear to be controlled by forces beyond their understanding and influence, and the general tone is one of helplessness, dissociation, and disorder.

In both HUSH, HUSH SWEET CHARLOTTE and WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? Bette Davis plays women who are perceived as monstrous by others, and, by extension, by the viewers of the films. Both Charlotte and Jane are understood to be guilty of criminal excesses of passion, both are irrational and uncontrollable, and—here lies the most disturbing element of the scenario—both believe themselves to be guilty of some monstrous yet unremembered behavior, purely on the strength of others' opinions. That their crimes were, in fact, committed by others is disturbing enough in itself; their lives have been destroyed by this injustice. But even more horrible is the fact that monstrosity is entirely a matter of perception. Reality, for both Charlotte and Jane, arises not out of observable fact, but social consensus, which is as arbitrary as the desires and wishes of others.

One of the most chilling films to come out of the uncertain years of the Cold War is THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE, in which the role of monster falls to one character after another as the plot unfolds to deeper and deeper levels. When a highly decorated war hero is revealed to be an unwilling assassin for the Communist Chinese, we forgive his actions because, like Norman Bates and Dr. Jekyll before him, he is unaware of his own potential for evil. The true monsters are, of course, the Asian brainwashers who control him. But this comforting affirmation of 60s American values is destroyed by the revelation that the ultimate evil is concealed within the American political Right—and within the institutional heart of American family values. This irony is underscored by the fact that the plot's leaders are, in fact, within the family: as in PYSCHO, it is the mother who is responsible for the creation of the monster. This monster-assassin then becomes the hero he was perceived to be only when he turns his ability to kill into a weapon against the "normal." A bitter political satire told with the blackest sense of humor, THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE dooms all attempts at moral judgment to utter relativism; we try, without success, to identify the true enemy, only to find that no faction is without its monsters.

This post-modern understanding of moral reality as a social construct that derives its validity from our prevailing beliefs develops even further, and with greater sophistication, in the '70s. Peter Medak's THE RULING CLASS begins as a charming tale about Jack, an upper-class madman who thinks he is Jesus Christ, and the relatives who try to have him cured in order to protect their interests in his enormous inheritance. From the outset, Medak makes it clear that his protagonist, played to perfection by Peter O'Toole, is more moral than the people who surround him, and probably just as sane. But the film takes a cruel turn from the expected path when the relatives' plot is successful. Normality is restored—at least, all appears to be normal. Jack takes his place as a respectable mem-

ber of Britain's ruling class, sitting in the House of Lords and riding to hounds on weekends. There are those who regret the loss of Jack's innocent and compassionate Christ persona, but no one is aware that he has exchanged one psychosis for another. The socially acceptable aristocrat of whom they now approve is not the "real" Jack, but another persona; he has become Jack the Ripper. Medak's drama explicitly criticizes the ethics of Britain's aristocracy, but it does something more, as well. The true horror of Jack's transformation lies in our realization that he is, despite his continuing madness, for all intents and purposes completely normal. Where the monstrous conforms to social consensus, it is no longer monstrous.

Roman Polanski's THE TENANT takes a subjective look at the progressive insanity of a Parisian apartment dweller who finds himself slipping into the personality of the previous tenant. Although we know that he is paranoid and delusional in relation to those around him, his subjective reality appears to have its own, independent validity. THE TENANT takes the themes that Polanski introduced a decade earlier in REPULSION and develops them to their logical (or illogical) conclusion. Reality becomes entirely dependent on belief, even to the point of determining one's identity, as binaries as fundamental as "self" and "other" break down. Polanski's tenant becomes monstrous, but only because his internal reality no longer matches that of the world in general.

Perhaps the ultimate 70s commentaries on the concept of monstrosity are found in the films of writer/director David Cronenberg, whose early ventures into the horror genre seem to revel in the confusion that arises when the arbitrariness of our social constructs is revealed. Whereas other directors had defined monsters in terms of their moral or immoral actions, Cronenberg created literal physical monsters whose morality was always ambiguous. Like Tod Browning's FREAKS (a film generally acknowledged to be far ahead of its time), Cronenberg's movies

In the 20th century, monstrosity became a symptom not of Evil but of evils—unhealthy social, political circumstances. Thus, monsters were also victims.

THE TENANT forces us to identify with the progressive insanity of a protagonist (Polanski) whose internal reality no longer matches the world's external reality.

force viewers to confront the inherent conflict between their visceral sense of monstrous abnormality and their intellectual sense of morality.

In his 1975 THEY CAME FROM WITHIN (a.k.a. SHIVERS), the moral assumptions underlying modern sexual permissiveness are stretched to their limits as the tenants of a swinging singles high-rise are infected by a parasite that turns them into voracious, uninhibited sexual monsters. Although they are, in fact, living entirely in keeping with the philosophy espoused by their "normal" neighbors, their lack of control and their abandoning of all respectable social facades places them beyond the norm. As the movie ends with the suggestion that these monsters may soon be in the majority, we are left with the question of who or what will then be considered monstrous. Similarly, both SCANNERS and THE BROOD deal with mutant humans whose monstrous physical powers challenge the rational, scientific establishment that created them. Victims of both the normal world and their own abnormal physiognomy, Cronenberg's characters agonize over the need to create a new moral code suitable to their condition. Once again, there are suggestions that these monsters are merely the first of a new type of human, what Cronenberg would later, in VIDEODROME, call "the new flesh." The pre-existing order, with its tidy binary definition of morality, is made obsolete; there is no turning back, no restoration of our world view.

Cronenberg answers the question "What is normal?" with an apparent paradox: "Nothing—and everything." The paradox makes perfect sense, however, when normality becomes simply a matter of opinion.

Real-life public opinion in the 60s and 70s was undergoing a transformation almost as radical as that of Cronenberg's characters. Fifties normality, epitomized by the Eisenhower administration and the suburban nuclear family, was challenged by a dazzling range of colorful sub-cultural movements. The cinema offered multiple and conflicting versions of the monstrous: HELLS ANGELS ON WHEELS vs. EASY RIDER, THE GREEN BERETS vs. APOCALYPSE NOW. The social and political protests of the Left spawned a host of anti-heroes who opposed what was portrayed as the banal, morally vacuous conformity of middle-class America. And the monsters of the horror genre, who had always had a special glamour about them, began, in many cases, to look more attractive than their normal (i.e. dull and predictable) victims.

This was not an entirely new concept; ARSENIC AND OLD LACE, released in 1944, featured two sweet, thoughtful psycho killers whose madness made them infinitely more engaging than their nameless, faceless, and ultimately luckless boarders. Hollywood's Frankenstein usually had the best intentions, frequently driven to independent experimentation by conservative and unimaginative medical establishments; this interpretation reached its apex with Peter Cushing's portrayal in the Hammer series: the Baron's ruthless pursuit of his ideal is clearly appalling, yet the audience receives a vicarious thrill as it cuts like a scalpel through the surrounding Victorian hypocrisy.

Later films, like IN COLD BLOOD (1967) and DOCTOR COOK'S GARDEN (1970), focused in on the feelings, motives, and experiences of criminals, creating a sympathetic response in the viewers by portraying "monsters" as human beings with familiar, recognizable traits that we could also

perceive in ourselves. But in the '70s, sympathy was no longer necessarily linked with traditionally "good" intentions, or even forgivable human weakness. If moral complacency had created a decadent North American society, then any force that threatened the corrupt establishment gained, almost automatically, the sympathies of a certain group of viewers, who were, for the most part, young, disillusioned, and often bored with their own middle-class upbringing. These new, charismatic, and spectacularly destructive monsters avenged the wrongs done by a villainous society; even if they were misguided, one could still enjoy the revolutionary consequences of their madness.

These agents of chaos were so attractive in their "otherness" that cult followings sprang up almost overnight. In the mid-'70s, THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW gave us monsters of such flamboyant originality that all other characters were eclipsed (Rocky Horror, of course, played intentionally with this concept, criticizing both the inanity and the hypocrisy of middle-class respectability). Leatherface and Frank were quickly followed by FRIDAY THE 13TH's Jason, HALLOWEEN's Michael, and A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET's Freddy.

Norman Bates, horror's classic ambiguous character: his attempt to conceal his mother's crimes is not evil complicity but a desperate attempt to preserve order in the face of chaos.

On a somewhat more sophisticated level, George Romero also was redefining the monster with his zombie trilogy, which had begun with the release (amid cries of public outrage) in 1968 of his NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and continued with DAWN OF THE DEAD (considered by many to be Romero's masterpiece) and the ruthlessly nihilistic DAY OF THE DEAD. Romero's zombies are not particularly sympathetic monsters—they are, at best, pathetic, unimaginative creatures who, despite their stupidity, present a very real threat to the normal world order. What is unusual about the trilogy is the way in which Romero treats virtually all his characters, human and zombie alike, as monsters. "Normal" humans prey on each other with just as much senseless hunger as their living dead counterparts, and with considerably less excuse.

Weirdly enough, horror movie monsters had, at this point, come full circle. They had begun, in legend and literature, as heralds of destruction and change; with Cronenberg, Romero, and Hooper, they once again represent the forces of anarchy, only this time they set about their dismantling of society with the sympathetic support of the audience.

The question is, where will we go from here? It is unlikely that we will unlearn the lessons of the late 20th century—the popularity of recent releases like PULP FICTION suggests that we not only accept, but embrace the instability and arbitrariness of a post-modern world view. Anthropologists have theorized that media phenomena like television advertisements and MTV function like a sort of perpetual Mardi Gras, overturning rules and expectations, but, unlike the Carnival, going on forever, replacing order without ever restoring it. With this as our paradigm, can we ever return to a clearly defined concept of "monster?"

Despite superficial appearances, we may be attempting to do just that. As charming and morbidly fascinating as they may be, the monsters in films like KALIFORNIA and THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS are ultimately overcome—not without cost, and not with the happy naivete of the 50s, but at least held off at arm's length so that normal life can proceed. Oliver Stone's NATURAL BORN KILLERS overtly criticizes the public hunger for abnormality, and advances the disturbing notion that monstrosity is a kind of modern-day contagion, and that the more attention we lavish on the abnormal, the weaker our resistance will become.

Whether these constitute the beginning of a reaction to the horror movies of the last two decades remains to be seen. By expanding and/or breaking down our definitions of normality and monstrosity, filmmakers have presented us with twin opportunities: to become, on the one hand, more compassionate and understanding, and, on the other hand, more brutal and insensitive. In all likelihood, we have learned both lessons equally well. Which we finally prefer will be the subject of future horror films.

SEVEN's Deadly Screenwriter: Andrew Kevin Walker on his horrific masterpiece.

By Anthony Montesano

A pervading darkness enshrouds SEVEN, even as Detectives Mills and Somerset attempt to bring the truth to light.

SEVEN is certainly a film that gets under your skin—and stays there. A greedy lawyer is forced to cut off a pound of his own flesh. A lustful prostitute is fucked to death with a double-bladed dildo. An obese, gluttonous man is forced to eat until his stomach explodes. In a world of moral decay, in a city of "rampant apathy," a serial killer is turning the seven deadly sins back on the sinners and the question is asked: is evil in a larger context of evil still evil?

It's not a new question, but it is the primary one in New Line Cinema's explosive and revolutionary entry into the horror genre. In addition to Detective Somerset (Morgan Freeman), a disillusioned veteran on the verge of retirement and Detective Mills (Brad Pitt), a brash young firebrand, SEVEN offers the audience a third character in the form of the city itself. This urban hell is grimy, populated with drug addicts and whores. It never stops raining, and there's always a pervading darkness shrouding the area. The city speaks volumes to the audience and sets a road for a possible explanation for these grisly crimes.

Brad Pitt plays Mills, a naive detective thwarted and ultimately corrupted by the evil he is pursuing.

Though the content of SEVEN may be shocking, it may be equally as shocking to learn that—despite popular critical babble—this is a film with very little violence on-screen. The violence is implied, and it certainly hangs over the proceedings, but you don't see much—you just think you do. In fact, you're sure you do, and that's simply great filmmaking.

The film is the second feature for ALIEN^3 director David Fincher, but it's the brainchild of screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker, who said, "There's lots of evil out there, and you're not always going to get the satisfaction of having any sort of under-standing of why that is. That's one of the things that scares people the most about serial killers."

It's been a busy year for the Hollywood upstart. His bevy of film productions began with the low-budget virtual reality thriller BRAINSCAN ("That film will always be near and dear to my heart," Walker admitted. "It was my first screen credit, and for all I knew at the time, it could have been my only credit"). Next up was the adaptation of the Dean Koontz novel HIDEAWAY, a project that started with Walker and was passed along to a string of script doctors ("literally five words of mine are left in that film," said Walker, who ultimately shared the on-screen writing credit with Neal Jimenez). While those projects made their way to screen, Walker was also commissioned to write a remake of THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW for Paramount and take a whack at the live-action version of Marvel Comics' THE X-MEN for Fox. (SLEEPY HOLLOW is still in development, and X-MEN has moved in a different direction than Walker had envisioned for it). However, the crowning achievement of Walker's year was the production of his most personal project to date, SEVEN.

"Ten years down the line, if nothing else got produced, I'd still have this great movie on video," said Walker. "When I'm run out of town, living my old age, running a miniature golf shop, I can always have what I've dreamt of having since I was very young."

The project has been Walker's best Hollywood experience yet. Director Fincher welcomed Walker's presence on the set, asking for an occasional suggestion or an on-the-spot rewrite. But Walker was content to allow Fincher the space he needed to interpret the project as he saw fit. "He's got enough to think about without me looking over his shoulder," said the writer.

In pre-production, SEVEN was the buzz of Hollywood. Trade papers announced it as New Line Cinema's most expensive film ever. Al Pacino was being talked up for the Somerset role, but he chose to play the mayor of New York in CITY HALL instead. At one point, Jeremiah Chechik (NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION) was attached to direct. Walker didn't create any character with an actor in mind, except for Detective Somerset , whom he envisioned William Hurt playing. But after seeing Freeman's performance, Walker can't think of anyone else in the role. "For me now, Freeman is Somerset ," says Walker. One might also imagine some level of symbolism attached to the name of the officer in the "autumn of his life," but Walker said he simply chose the name because W. Somerset Maugham is one of his favorite writers.

Walker also feels that he shouldn't dictate an interpretation of his work for just that reason. Although all of his films deal with good and evil, Walker isn't about to play pop-psychologist. "The less said on my part, the better, because anybody's interpretation is as valid as mine," he claimed. "If anybody who looks at a film and likes it enough to take a personal meaning from it, then I think that's great. It wouldn't even matter what was

intended. In fact, it could even ruin things for a person if someone tried to put his imposed intention upon it. If a writer is trying to express something, but it's not there in the work, and somebody's got to pick it up in an interview, then he hasn't done a very good job getting his point across to anyone."

SEVEN doesn't fit neatly into the expectations of the viewer, and when all is said and done the audience is more apt to feel violated and exhausted than reassured. And that's the whole point. Beyond its content, cinematically much of SEVEN is about denying satisfaction and disturbing the rhythm of the viewer. In a nutshell, it's everything the so-called cognoscenti of Hollywood believe audiences *don't* want. Despite discussions during the production with producer Arnold Kopelson (THE FUGITIVE) about making the film more upbeat, the other heavyhitters involved in the film (Freeman, Pitt, and Fincher) all fought for Walker's darker vision. And their faith proved justified when audiences flocked to the film (oppression and all). But why? "I don't really know, aside from the fact that Brad Pitt is in it?" admitted Walker. "Morgan Freeman is amazing. Kevin Spacey is amazing. I'm just glad and gratified, especially in light of keeping my original ending. No one has any idea what's going to make money or not."

Ironically, Walker's inspiration for SEVEN—clearly his most successful achievement to date—came while he was living in New York and still struggling to become a screenwriter. "I didn't like my time in New York, but it's true that if I hadn't lived there I probably wouldn't have written SEVEN," he said. "But I think it's that way for anything—the right time and the right mood, and the right inspiration, whatever inspiration is. That's what's so scary about writing."

Though Walker is a fan of the horror genre, he'll test the waters in other areas as well. His next project, RED, WHITE, BLACK & BLUE, is a comedy for Paramount. A period piece which draws its inspiration from the host of '70s cop films ("everything from SHAFT and FREEBIE & THE BEAN to the FRENCH CONNECTION," said Walker), it centers on three cops trying to stop a huge heroin deal from going down on July 4, 1976. "It's played totally straight but will be hilarious, I hope." □

The horror! The horror!

SEVEN

A New Line Cinema release of an Arnold Kopelson production. Producers: Kopelson, Phyllis Carlyle. Executive producers: Gianni Nunnari, Dan Kolsrud, Anne Kopelson. Director: David Fincher. Camera: Darius Khondji. Editor: Richard Francis-Bruce. Music: Howard Shore. Production design: Arthur Max. Art direction: Gary Wissner. Set design: Elizabeth Lapp. Costume design: Michael Kaplan. Sound: Willie D. Burton. Special makeup effects: Rob Bottin. Screenplay by Andrew Kevin Walker. 9/95, 125 mins. Rating: R.

David Mills..........Brad Pitt
William Somerset..........Morgan Freeman
Tracy Mills..........Gwyneth Paltrow
Talbot..........Richard Roundtree

by Patricia Moir

Morgan Freeman as Detective Somerset, who struggles to maintain order amidst a crumbling universe, even while recognizing the futility of his efforts.

What happens when our great social meta-narratives—the systems of order created by religion, science, and art—fall into decline? According to post-modern theorists, our world view ruptures and decays; without the paradigms by which we perceive meaning, we are left only with the chaos of everyday experience, which we must interpret as best we can by collecting the fragments and trying to fit them into some sort of coherent whole. It's rather like attempting to finish a jigsaw puzzle without ever having seen the picture on the box, and with some of the pieces missing. This, theorists say, is the growing state of mind in contemporary North America. It is certainly the state of things in SEVEN, probably the closest thing to a completely post-modern film that Hollywood has produced to date.

From the opening credits—a masterful piece of filmmaking in themselves—SEVEN thrusts us into a disorienting welter of fragmented sounds, words, and images which obscure as much as they reveal. There's a coherent plot here, to be sure, with a beginning, a middle, and an end: what, when, and how are described in ruthless detail. But the meaning of it all, the "why," remains elusive. Along with detectives Somerset (Freeman) and Mills (Pitt), we are forced to order and re-order the fragments as they are presented to us, seeking some rational explanation for the incomprehensible horrors of the killer's acts.

This piecing together of clues is, of course, the stuff of all good murder mysteries. But SEVEN denies us the smug conclusiveness of a conventional fiction: "Even the most promising clues only lead to others," Somerset observes. "We're picking up the pieces...That's all." As in real life, our vision is distorted and distracted by irrelevant details. Rarely has a camera lens mimicked so faithfully the eye of the beholder, focusing briefly on isolated objects at the crime scenes, only to return obsessively to the most visually striking images—a neon cross in the murderer's apartment, a word scrawled in blood on a pristine carpet, the pattern of veins on the back of a corpse's neck. In the action sequences, vision is jarred, moving in and out of focus, and shots are framed and lit in such a way that key information is always withheld.

The film's major characters, both cops and killer, construct their own versions of purpose and meaning out of the incomplete and disconnected bits of their experience, filtering the pieces through their own personal paradigms to arrive at some understanding of "reality." Pitt gives a creditable performance as a moral naif who believes that atrocity is simply a deviation from a stable and dependable norm; and Spacey, as the messianic serial murderer, brings an eerie rationality to his pseudo-religious interpretation of urban moral decay. But it is Freeman, as the veteran cop exhausted by the horrors of the homicide squad, who really epitomizes the picture's themes. In the film's most moving and revealing scene, Somerset lies unsleeping in his apartment, caught between the disordered sounds of the street outside his window and the fragile, comforting ticks of the metronome which he keeps at his bedside. Even while recognizing the futility of his effort, he struggles to create order out of the remnants of a mythical golden age, seeking his answers in Shakespeare, Milton, and Bach. Unlike the murderer, who reads these texts through the distorting lens of religious fanaticism, and Mills, who sees their ideas with a simplistic, "Cliff's Notes" reductionism, Somerset has a tragic, heroic dignity as a man who remains true to himself even when his Truths are in question.

Fisher and screenwriter Walker scatter intelligent and blackly humorous references to post-modern culture throughout their narrative: disjunctive television images, a stack of Warholian spaghetti-sauce tins, comments on the excesses of performance art and the cult celebrity of serial killers ("You're a movie of the week," Mills tells the murderer, "You're a fucking T-shirt"). But this tongue-in-cheek commentary intensifies rather than relieves the overall atmosphere of desperation; it is simply another set of unreadable signs waiting for an arbitrary assignation of meaning. When all is done, SEVEN offers no answers; nothing has changed, except possibly for the worse. The visceral horrors come to an end, but the existential horrors of modern America are, it suggests, only beginning. SEVEN is a brilliant and unconventional film which demands a great investment on the part of its audience. Viewing it with the attention it deserves is a rewarding experience but not a pleasant one. □

CINEMA
By Steve Biodrowski

UNLUCKY NUMBER SEVEN
It's not genre fantasy? Well, let's hope it's not reality!

Some films, because of their impact or quality, warrant more attention than usual; therefore, I will offer an opinion on SEVEN (●●●●), even though it has already received the Review-Interview treatment (pages 48 and 49), plus a further capsule comment (page 55). Beyond the thematic content evaluated elsewhere, let me say that, on a basic level, the film is terrifying because, unlike too many horror films today, it creates a believable world in which its horrors seem all too appropriate. I say "creates" because I don't want to accept this world as the same one in which we live; however, a great deal of the film's effectiveness comes from convincing us that this *is* a completely accurate portrait of reality. (Viewers whose psyches require an antidote should see BABE [page 56], a film which also creates its own world—alas, one which seems far more distant from ours.)

Director David Fincher's patented gloomy atmosphere, evident in ALIEN 3, is put to excellent and disturbing use in SEVEN, starring Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman.

Of course, SEVEN started with a great script, but credit for visualizing its oppressive urban landscape goes to David Fincher, who a few years ago seemed like the briefest flash in the pan when ALIEN^3 fizzled. In retrospect, it is worth noting that, despite that film's obvious failings, Fincher did manage to suffuse the film with an ominous atmosphere of dread that actually made the weak story work fairly effectively in the early scenes. Even arbitrary plot machinations (such as offing the other two survivors of ALIENS) were milked for maximum dramatic effect. Who can deny the gut-wrenching impact of watching Sigourney Weaver's Ripley forced to endure Newt's autopsy?

Back to current films: Some interesting oddities have turned up this year, thanks to the Laemmle and Landmark theatre chains. One of the best was ARIZONA DREAM (●●●), the first American film from award-winning Yugoslavian director Emir Kustarica. The film received a few test screenings from Warner Bros. in '94, then went direct to video early this year, but Kitt Parker films released the longer director's cut in August. Johnny Depp stars as another one of his eccentrics, in this case a strange dreamer summoned to Arizona when his uncle (Jerry Lewis) gets engaged. There, he becomes involved with an older woman (Faye Dunaway) and her suicidal stepdaughter (Lili Taylor, who turned up in THE ADDICTION). The events that ensue are more wacky than fantastic, but inexplicable imagery abounds: fish float through the air; ambulances take off for the moon and Depp has visions of himself and his uncle as Eskimos. The strangeness of the characters, which is edged with darkness, can sometimes be off-putting, but the film is so imaginative and unpredictable that it overcomes this. (A comic highlight is a live stage performance by the sidekick of Depp's character, an aspiring actor whose routine consists of recreating the crop duster scene from NORTH BY NORTHWEST—i.e., he repeatedly stares up in the air and then dives face down on the floor!) Unfortunately, the print in theatres was missing the subtitles in the last fantasy sequence, so audiences missed the dialogue summing up the film's theme: that troubling experiences, such as those encountered by the young protagonist, are part of a rite of passage into adulthood. Not necessarily a profound thought, but it is conveyed with profundity through Kustarica's lively filmmaking.

The DEER HUNTER-type flashback scene from MEET THE FEEBLES, a puppet movie that overturns a MUPPETS-style premise into a sordid backstage story.

Peter Jackson's MEET THE FEEBLES (●●) actually preceded both DEAD ALIVE (a.k.a. BRAINDEAD) and HEAVENLY CREATURES, but it finally received a small stateside release this September. The premise is a conscious rip-off of the old MUPPETS television show, which each week portrayed Kermit trying to maintain order backstage while keeping the show going—except that Kermit never had to deal with graft, drug addiction, 'Nam flashbacks, and venereal disease. Basically, this is a one-joke movie (put a sordid spin on puppets), and once you figure that out, it often isn't very funny, simply because it's so predictable. However, Jackson redeems himself with a truly outrageous conclusion, the funniest bit of on-screen carnage since Monty Python lampooned Sam Peckinpah with their "Salad Days" sketch: the Feebles' insecure, overweight prima dona hippo goes on a murderous rampage, blowing away her puppet compatriots with a machine gun that would do Rambo proud. (Foreshadowing HEAVENLY CREATURES, we are told this murderess later got out of jail and, under a new identity, wrote a book!) Imagine the climax of DEAD/ALIVE, but with puppets, and you'll get the idea.

Spike and Mike's Festival of Sick and Twisted Animation (●) is a sort of annual event on the Midnight Movie circuit, a collection of short films that most definitely are *not* G-rated family entertainment. Unfortunately, many of them are also not entertaining, at least this year. Some of the older, returning entries (BIG TOP ASSHOLE is a typical title, along with THE DIRTY BIRDY and NO NECK JOE) are fairly funny, but the newer films don't hold up. The problem may have something to do with the selection: the festival seems to go for films that derive humor from the shock effect of employing grotesque and/or disgusting imagery within the context of a cartoon. Well, like all shock effects, the shock wears off after a few exposures. The cumulative effect is an enervating one, unfortunately; but at least they included Mike Judge's early Beavis and Butthead cartoon, FROGBALL, so it wasn't all bad. □

2 B&W fang flicks take a bite out of the Big Apple

NADJA

David Lynch presents a Kino Link production. Producers: Mary Sweeney, Amy Hobby. Executive producer: David Lynch. Director: Michael Almereyda. Camera: (DuArt b&w), Jim Denault. Editor: David Leonard. Music: Simon Fisher Turner. Production design: Kurt Ossenfort. Costume design: Prudence Moriarty. Sound: (Dolby), William Kozy. Sound Design: Stewert Levy. Written by Michael Almereyda. 9/94, 95 mins.

Cassandra	Suzy Amis
Lucy	Galaxy Craze
Jim	Martin Donovan
Dr. Van Helsing	Peter Fonda
Renfield	Karl Geary
Edgar	Jared Harris
Nadja	Elina Lowensohn
Morgue security guard	David Lynch

THE ADDICTION

A Russell Simmons presentation. Producers: Denis Hann, Fernando Sulichin. Executive producers: Russell Simmons, Preston Holmes. Director: Abel Ferrara. Camera: (DuArt b&w), Ken Kelsch. Editor: Mayin Lo. Music: Joe Delia. Production design: Charlie Lagola. Art direction: Beth Curtis. Costume design: Melinda Eschelman. Sound: (Dolby), Robert Taz. Line producer: Margot E. Lulick. Screenplay by Nicholas St. John. 10/95, 82 mins.

Kathleen Conklin	Lili Taylor
Peina	Christopher Walken
Casanova	Annabella Sciorra
Jean	Edie Falco
The Professor	Paul Calderon
Black	Fredro Star
College Student	Kathryne Erbe
Missionary	Michael Imperioli
Black Friend	Jamel "Redrum" Simmons

by Denise Dumars and Steve Biodrowski

Armed with a Fisher-Price PXL 2000, writer-director Almereyda plows a familiar graveyard in NADJA, harkening back to Universal classics (with the B&W photography) and to AIP cheapies (with the presence of Peter Fonda). But this is also an Art Film: so, presumably, everything has a deeper meaning.

As the film opens, Van Helsing (Fonda) is on the trail of Dracula's twin offspring, Nadja and Edgar (Jared Harris), having just staked the vampire king off-screen. ("He was like Elvis at the end," the doctor comments of his undead adversary, "burnt out...surrounded by zombies.") Ironically, his nephew's wife Lucy (the aptly named Galaxy Craze) has just become Nadja's latest obsession. Lucy's seduction is supposed to be erotic, but how well it works depends at least partly on the Pixelvision vampire's-eye point-of-view. It's interesting as a gimmick and certainly strange as a visual effect, but it doesn't really identify the audience with the vampires; if anything, it distances the action by reminding us how beautiful the rest of the photography is.

The relationship between Lucy and her husband (Donovan) is tender and evocative, even if Lucy seems hardly to be participating. There's another relationship that the film explores well: that of women and blood. Lucy's menstrual difficulties are graphically explored as part of her relationship to her own body and to vampirism, and they seem to relate to her detachment from Jim and from life in general.

NADJA is a provocative but ultimately traditional view of vampirism. Lowensohn, who had a small but memorable role in SCHINDLER'S LIST, does an admirable job of portraying the dangerous and alluring daughter of Dracula. But it is Fonda's kooky portrayal that lifts the film above its pretentiousness. When things begin to get too heavy and symbolic, you can count on him to burst into the room; his manic performance (reminiscent of a '60s conspiracy nut) injects comedic energy into an otherwise lifeless narrative. Another comic touch is the cameo appearance by executive producer David Lynch as a morgue attendant. And the conclusion provides a fairly active climax, in contrast to the otherwise slow proceedings.

Whereas NADJA swaths its art house aspirations in luminous cinematography, THE ADDICTION (the year's *other* B&W New York City mean street vampire film) uses monochrome to blunt the brutal impact of what would otherwise be overpowering imagery. Not that the film is excessively violent; rather it's a heavy-duty philosophical dissertation on humanity's addiction to evil.

Thankfully, the film abandons the overused seductive side of vampirism, treating the subject as the title would imply. Amazingly, for all the Nietzchean philosophizing, the film is almost traditional in its conclusions. Kathleen, a grad student bitten one night by Sciorra's vampire, rationalizes her new addiction (to blood *and* to the violence necessary to obtain it) by claiming she is going beyond Good and Evil—that is, putting what she has learned into practice. In the film's ghoulish highlight, she gives a practical demonstration at her graduation party, which turns into a bloody bacchanalia.

Like SEVEN, the film paints its bloody events as a logical consequence of the world around us, but this script ends on a note of salvation: after Walken pops up as an older vampire who shows that willpower can fend off the addiction, Kathleen defeats her hunger by resorting to traditional sacraments, confession and communion, which are portrayed not as magical cures but as symbols of her act of will. Though not as visually inventive as NADJA, this film better justifies its pretensions. □

NADJA enhances its modern vampire tale with excellent B&W imagery.

Kathleen (Lili Taylor), an inexperienced vampire, makes the mistake of accosting Peina (Christopher Walken), an old pro who teaches her a painful lesson.

FILM RATINGS

●●●●	Catch it opening night
●●●	Worth seeing first run
●●	Wait for second-run
●	Wait for video/cable
○	Fodder for MST-3K

VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN

Director: Wes Craven. Paramount Pictures. 10/95, 101 mins. With: Eddie Murphy, Angela Bassett, Allen Payne, Kadeem Hardison.

In a way, the funniest thing about this movie is the extent to which it resists the temptation to be a comedy. In fact, there is not much more humor here than in the average contemporary horror film; that is, Eddie Murphy, as the vampire Maximilian, makes fewer quips than Freddy Krueger.

The proceedings launch with an admirable nod to Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*: a ghost ship plows into New York harbor with a dead crew, and a wolf (actually a vampire in disguise) jumps ashore. Also, the first half-hour is a pleasingly smooth blend of two presumably different sensibilities: those of Murphy and of director Wes Craven. Of course, they are not really so different: Craven has often shown a penchant for humor, and Murphy has played in hard-edged films like 48 HOURS. With Craven providing the scares and Murphy providing the laughs, it seems as if VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN would be a perfect combination.

Unfortunately, nobody provided a plot worth pursuing. The basic story (reminiscent of COMING TO AMERICA) has Murphy arriving in New York to search for a mate. The dubious notion that vampires need to breed sexually is "justified" in a brief dialogue reference or two, indicating that the "undead" are actually a separate species; unfortunately, this idea is contradicted by the fact that Maximilian *can* turn his human victims into vampires.

Maximilian tries to seduce a police officer played by Bassett into accepting his sanguinary lifestyle. Unfortunately, the dilemma of a human being resisting the temptation of vampirism is far too worn out to generate any interest. We've seen it in NEAR DARK and THE HUNGER, not to mention the current THE ADDICTION, which handles the theme far more profoundly; VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN even borrows THE LOST BOYS' gimmick of saying that a human doesn't become a complete vampire until he/she makes a first kill.

This tired plot grinds the momentum to a halt, despite much huffing and puffing. Our heroine is reduced to running around helplessly (it's hard to imagine Bassett as helpless after her athletic turn in STRANGE DAYS), and a series of unresolved confrontations near the end fragments the climax, when one big scene would have been better. Still, Murphy makes an excellent vampire, relying on tongue-in-cheek inflection and leaving the broad comedy to the supporting characters (two of whom he also plays, unrecognizable underneath excellent makeup by KNB FX).

●● Steve Biodrowski

BIBLIOFILE

By Dennis Fischer

PSYCHO: *Behind-the-Scenes with Janet Leigh.*

PSYCHO may well be the most written about movie ever made, one whose cunningly crafted, cinematically scintillating shocks make it the source for endless speculations. Now lead actress Janet Leigh adds to the verbiage with *PSYCHO: Behind the Scenes of the Classic Thriller*, her own personal recounting of the film's production and its impact on her life.

Thankfully, this is not simply a star's vanity project, but a well-written and researched tome that adds to our knowledge of this most seminal and influential of films. It does not have the exhaustive detail of Stephen Rebello's *Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of PSYCHO* (1990, originally written as an article for *Cinefantastique*), but it does add to and make corrections on Rebello's earlier book and has a charm all Leigh's own.

Leigh debunks the myths that she was replaced by a stand-in during the shower scene and that designer Saul Bass physically directed the famed sequence (Bass merely storyboarded it for Hitchcock). She and her collaborator Chris Nickens interviewed several key surviving participants, including Robert Bloch (since deceased), Joseph Stefano, John Gavin, Berry Perkins (Tony's widow), Peggy Robertson, and first assistant director Hilton Green, who filled in important and interesting background details.

Janet Leigh, seen here being directed by Alfred Hitchcock in the famous shower scene, has written a book about her experiences on PSYCHO.

When asked why she decided to write this book, she responded, "People have asked why I waited so long [to write a book on PSYCHO]. Well, who knew that 35 years later it would still be of interest?...What [really] spurred it in the beginning ...I had gone to a convention at the theme park in Orlando, Florida, and ...the young man, who was giving me the prints to sign at that time at the convention, said that I had signed at least 1500 to 2,000 pictures. So when I was in New York after that, we were just thinking about the remarkable endurance of this picture and interest that it still inspired. In kicking that around, we realized also that of all the books on Hitchcock or PSYCHO, none have been done by someone who is an actual, participating person. They'd all been done by researchers, and certainly well done.

"That was the beginning of it. [I felt that I should do] something about this phenomenon called PSYCHO. Then in getting into it and doing the research and everything, there still were things that could be discussed only by someone who was there, so I really attacked this with great relish in the research, in the reviewing, and in the interviews. I had a tremendous amount of insight that I had not bothered to analyze to myself. Unless you have a reason, you don't sit and ponder about things, and this gave me the reason for doing it, and I've really enriched myself because of that and am glad that it happened."

Leigh and Christopher Nickens split the interviewing chores and shared each other's findings. "We couldn't do all the interviews together," said Leigh, "but we did do all the research in terms of the Academy, Universal, Paramount and all of that. It just was easier for me to interview some people because of my association but he could do it with certain people just as well as I. What we did was, he sort of set it up, in terms of analytical and statistical, and I started with the effect immediately. In other words, I put my life where it was and then each step of the picture itself—when I got the script and my reaction."

While Leigh provides her personal subjective point of view and her memories, Nickens, who has previously written star biographies of Streisand, Brando and Davis, gives objective and analytical looks at the film. "I think our voices come out quite strongly as to each other's intent," comments Leigh.

The book is replete with seldom before seen production photos, many from Leigh's own collection. It is presented in a breezy, appealing, down-to-earth style that makes for an enjoyable and informative read. It proves a worthy addition to any film fan's library. □

DR. JEKYLL AND MS. HYDE

Directed by David Price. Savoy Pictures. 8/95. 89 mins. With: Sean Young, Tim Daly, Lysette Anthony, Stephen Tobolowsky, Harvey Fierstein.

The off-the-wall premise of turning Hyde into a woman seems like a guaranteed high concept, but the film milks precious little humor from it; in fact, Hammer's old DR JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE did a better job by playing it straight. Actually, the film seems fairly promising early on, with a 20th-century descendant Dr. Richard Jacks (Daly) theorizing that there might be a genetic component responsible for evil; unfortunately, why this evil gene should be linked with Jacks' feminine side is a question left unanswered. Young is consistently entertaining as Ms. Hyde, but her most amusing appearances are early in the film, when she is up to more subtle scheming, as opposed to the outrageous skullduggery to follow. Ultimately, this descends into silly nonsense, which would be fine—except that, like too many comedies today, the filmmakers still think they can still mix in some genuine suspense and melodrama. It should be obvious that when an audience comes to laugh at a guy morphing into a woman, they're not going to get too worked up over his troubled relationship with his girlfriend.

● **Steve Biodrowski**

FLUKE

Directed by Carlo Carlei. MGM/UA. 6/95. 95 mins. With: Matthew Modine, Nancy Travis, Eric Stoltz, Max Pomeranc..

A man dies in a car accident, reincarnates as a dog, then eventually remembers his previous life and sets out to find his family, who he thinks are in danger. This is a film designed to tug at the sentimental heartstrings, and it does, quite effectively. Especially impressive is the first third of the movie, which tells the story from a dog's-eye view, with low-slung hand-held camera angles and little dialogue. The middle portion, wherein the pup, named Fluke, teams up with a junkyard dog named Rumbo (voiced by Samuel L. Jackson), is a bit more con-

HALLOWEEN: THE CURSE OF MICHAEL MYERS—if you've seen Part One, you've seen 'em all.

A LITTLE PRINCESS: the magic of storytelling sees children through tough times.

ventional, but the family reunion at the end is guaranteed to bring tears to the eyes of pet lovers everywhere. Especially pleasing is that the motivation for Fluke's search for home turns out to be a red herring, instead of opting for the convenient doggie-to-the-rescue climax which the film pretends to be building toward. An unfairly neglected film worth renting on video.

●● Steve Biodrowski

HACKERS

Directed by Iain Softley. United Artists. 105 mins. With: Johnny Lee Miller, Angelina Jolie, Jesse Bradford.

A muddled mess crammed with eye-popping visuals that don't add up to anything. Some teenage computer hackers stumble upon an embezzlement scheme and get blamed for it, until they turn the tables on the real criminals. Unfortunately, the film can't focus on this serviceable plot, instead drifting away into subplots involving a private competition between the leading lady and leading man, who of course go from hating to loving each other after teaming up to fight the common enemy. Ridiculously overdone direction constantly has SWAT teams breaking down doors of the good guys—obviously, the film was meant to appeal to paranoid teenagers who think they're persecuted unfairly by the adult world. Anybody else is left wondering why the police even care so much.

● Jay Stevenson

HALLOWEEN: THE CURSE OF MICHAEL MYERS

Directed by Joe Chappelle. Dimension Films. 9/95. 88 mins. With: Donald Pleasence, Mitch Ryan, Marianne Hagan, Paul Rudd.

This series is dead, dead, dead. Why won't Hollywood let it rest in peace? Despite one or two suspenseful passages, the filmmakers at some point clearly abandoned the idea of returning to the more suggestive style of the original HALLOWEEN. A survivor of the original film is now a disturbed young man hoping to confront and defeat Michael Myers (didn't the FRIDAY THE 13TH films already do this?), and Dr. Loomis (the late Donald Pleasence) pops up to help out. The film offers an unsatisfying explanation of the mysterious figure in black from HALLOWEEN 5, and the whole premise is muddled beyond comprehension: apparently some evil organization has been protecting Michael—except he turns against them during the course of the film. How did they keep him under control so long, and for what purpose? Don't ask; the filmmakers aren't telling.

● Steve Biodrowski

A KID IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT

Directed by Michael Gottlieb. Walt Disney. 8/95. 95 mins. With: Thomas Ian Nicholas, Joss Ackland, Art Malik, Paloma Baeza.

Had this film been made over twenty years ago, it would have no doubt starred Kurt Russell and/or Hayley Mills: it seems cut from that same studio cloth—a mediocre yet harmless family entertainment. An "update" of the Mark Twain classic, substituting a little leaguer (Nicholas) for a Connecticut Yankee, the film derives most of its humor by injecting modern day elements (Rollerblades, CD players, and phrases like "Cool!") into Camelot. The end result is that most of the jokes fall flat and most scenes pass with nary a laugh. After seeing A KID IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT, one will no doubt wonder why they didn't just adapt Twain's classic to the screen and leave the Rollerblades at home.

●● Michael Lyons

A LITTLE PRINCESS

Directed by Alfonso Cuaron. Warner Bros. 4/95. 97 mins. With: Eleanor Bron, Liam Cunningham, Liesel Matthews, Rusty Schwimmer.

A wonderful, truly magical film for the whole family. The fantasy element is small: a little girl, orphaned in a girls' school when her father goes missing in action, keeps her spirits alive by telling a fanciful tale of an Indian Prince battling a monster, which the film brings to life with imaginative CGI. But even the realistic sequences maintain an amazing sense of wonder, through careful use of production design and photography that make even a dingy attic seem like a fairly tale locale. Unlike many "uplifting" films, this one puts its message across with conviction: that no matter the outward unfortunate circumstances of one's life, it is belief in one's self that really matters. It's a crime that Warner Brothers couldn't sell this movie to audiences who would have loved it. Thank goodness for videotape.

●●● Steve Biodrowski

MAGIC IN THE WATER

Directed by Rick Stevenson. Triumph. 110 mins. With: Mark Harmon, Harley Jane Kozak, Sarah Wayne.

MAGIC IN THE WATER reminds me of "Puff the Magic Dragon"—about what happens to Jackie Paper (and the rest of us) when he (and we) grows up. Ostensibly, it is the story of two lonely children who need time with the divorced father they worship yet rarely see. This summer, they are to spend four weeks with him in a cabin by a lake somewhere in Canada. But the constant ringing of mobile phones and faxes, as the trip begins, leads one to believe that life with father will not be the vacation they had imagined. Dad (perfectly played by an often under appreciated Harmon), is a psychiatrist married to his work, with little time for or interest in his children.

An idyllic drive through the small resort town sets the tone subtly: everything is a little out of the ordinary, a little off, a little surreal perhaps.They find

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Eric Stoltz and Nancy Travis are perplexed by a persistent dog in FLUKE. They don't know it's her reincarnated husband.

LASERBLAST: The Val Lewton Collection

By Dennis Fischer

Turner Home Entertainment and Image Entertainment released the definitive six-disc, nine-film laserdisc box set of all Val Lewton's horror films, including for the first time, THE GHOST SHIP (1943), long trapped in legal limbo by a plagiarism lawsuit.

Lewton was an intelligent producer hired by RKO to head a B-movie horror unit. The results are still celebrated as some of the best films of the '40s. He brought a psychological perspective lacking in the monster movies of the era, using atmosphere and suggestion to create his horrific effects.

Lewton made three films with director Jacques Tourneur. CAT PEOPLE (1942) is about Irena (the beautiful Simone Simon), a Serbian fashion designer obsessed with the idea that she will turn into a panther should her passions become unleashed. I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE, a transposition of Brontë's *Jane Eyre* into the tropics, is suffused with a poetic morbidity, and a stand-out sequence (leading to a voodoo ritual in the fields) creates great tension without employing a word of dialogue. Even more intense is a famous sequence in THE LEOPARD MAN, based on Cornell Woolrich's *Dark Alibi*, wherein a young girl is sent out at night by her mother on an errand that ends in tragedy.

When Tourneur moved to A-films, editor Mark Robson graduated to directing THE SEVENTH VICTIM, an odd assemblage of devil cults and suicidal impulses which lacks the intensity of the earlier films but remains nevertheless haunting. There is a shower sequence in which an intruder can be seen through the curtain, which presages the famous scene in PSYCHO. THE GHOST SHIP has a fine sequence in which a giant unsecured hook swings menacingly during a storm and another in which Lawrence Tierney (in his film debut) is smothered by the anchor chain, but the film is more psychological drama than horror.

THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE is even less horrific, being primarily a fantasy about a girl (Ann Carter) who retreats into a world of make-believe, much to the horror of her father

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NOSTALGIA

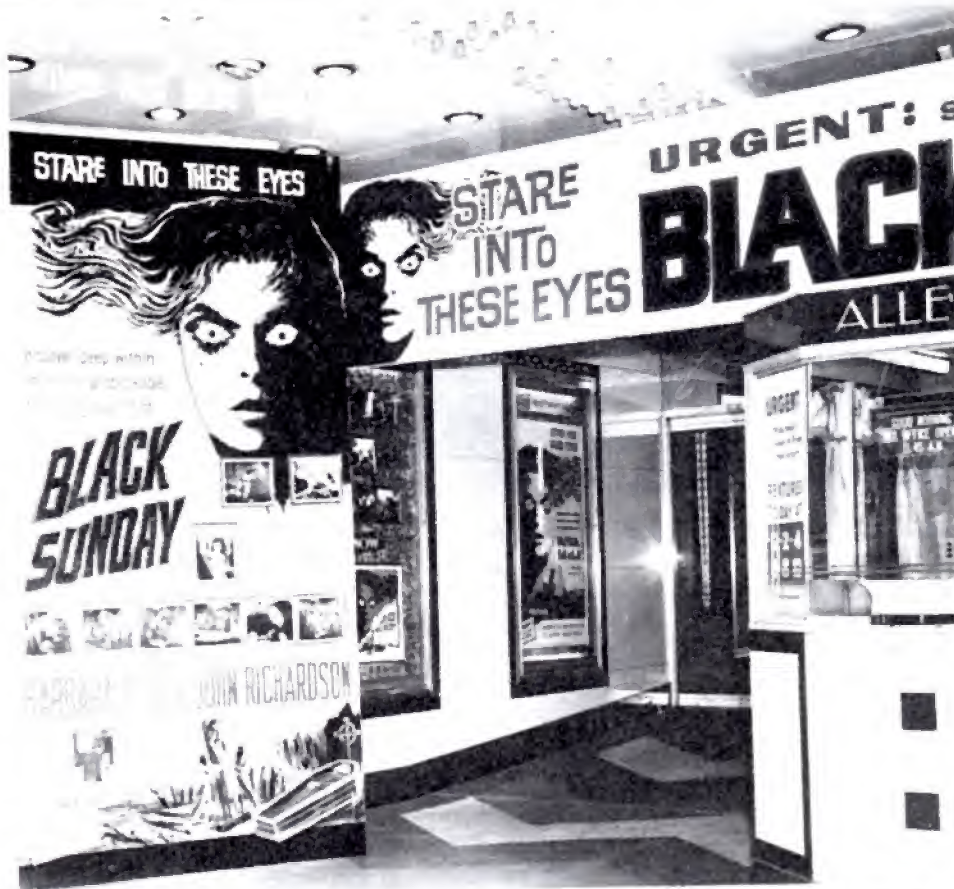
By Christopher S. Dietrich

BLACK SUNDAY

Mario Bava's vampire classic, as seen in its debut.

Danville, Illinois, an industrial city of 40,000 straddling the Illinois-Indiana border, is a classic example of a Midwestern blue-collar factory town, surrounded by Norman Rockwell-esque rural landscapes. As a boy craving drama and excitement in these placid surroundings, I looked no further than the public library and most especially to three movie theaters: the Fischer (highbrow), the Holmes (generally mainstream fare, though I did see KISS OF THE VAMPIRE there—first run, no less), and the Palace (all the horror and sci-fi movies played here).

One chilly evening in 1961, my mother decided to take me to the Palace, for a double bill of SERENGETI and a strange item entitled BLACK SUNDAY. Other than perhaps GIGI, I can't recall ever having witnessed a cinematic event. The evening would prove to be a critical one which I will never forget.



BLACK SUNDAY received gaudy promotional material when it originally played in 1961. What was it like to see it then? Our correspondent offers his recollection.

After the splashy color feature of wild animals in Africa, the screen darkened, and the long burgundy velvet curtains closed. When those curtains opened once again, a very sinister event unfolded in beautiful blacks and whites. Barbara Steele, the raven-haired beauty on-screen, was very seductive and alluring, though most kids of my era had no idea what sex and eroticism were. As a woman denounced as a witch, she was tied to a stake and surrounded by black-robed, hooded men who nailed a mask of Satan on her face. My mother gasped at what progressed, suddenly realizing she had taken her one and only son to a horror movie—and a fairly strong one at that.

My mother's discomfort continued throughout the film until finally, at one point, she demanded that we leave the theater. In my first complete and total act of defiance, I not only refused to leave but also informed her that I would move up a few rows up to enjoy the remainder of the film by myself. My flesh really crawled when the woman revived as a vampire and commanded her assistant, Javuto to dig himself out of the earth and rise from his grave.

My obsession with this Italian Gothic masterwork would continue for the rest of my life. While still a little boy, I used to write regularly to the Kerasotes Theater chain and request that they show BLACK SUNDAY on Halloween or during the special triple bills shown at the Palace every Friday the 13th. On at least a few occasions, they granted my wish. I always looked forward to any opportunity to see this film on television as well. Once, I even recorded the entire movie on audiotape so I could relive the experience. Remember the days before VCRs?

I left Illinois at the age of 20 and came to California, where I began writing about my first love: the movies. After doing a great deal of research in Berkeley, pouring over film periodicals, I wanted to attempt a celebrity interview. My choice of subject? Barbara Steele, of course.

I contacted her agency, and I was thrilled beyond belief when she consented to be interviewed. I nervously awaited her arrival, as this was my first real celebrity encounter—and with my favorite star at that! Quickly, she put me at ease with her charm, grace, and quick wit. To this day, Barbara Steele is one of the truly funniest people I know. This is not to even mention that she is gorgeous, with the most beautiful eyes I've ever seen.

We spoke at length about her movies; however, she seemed to have great disdain for most of them, save for her work with Federico Fellini and Volker Schloendorff, and her appreciation for my personal favorite, BLACK SUNDAY, seemed somewhat reserved. That she did not share my complete fascination with this landmark was at first a disappointment, but I came to understand that it was made too long ago for her to remember it clearly: "It's like trying to remember the high school prom," she used to say.

That interview we did in July 1976 was later supplemented by another conducted in January of 1978. This time, we borrowed a print of BLACK SUNDAY, and after screening it, she expressed great respect for director Mario Bava's unquestionable visual talent. But again, when I turned the subject to the making of the film, she would say things like, "Please remember, Chris, you know much more about this film than I."

One fateful day in May of 1980, I received a telephone call informing me that Mario Bava had died. Quickly, I called Barbara to let her know of his passing. She took the news very seriously, because she always credited him for launching her career. This is when one evening she sat at an ancient manual typewriter and composed the following lovely tribute to the late great Maestro:

"I feel extremely sad on hearing of the death of Mario Bava—as if a windscreen wiper roughly sweeps across 20 years and suddenly the landscape is pristine clear, and I can see Mr. Bava standing with perfect equanimity in an old tweed jacket on a sub-zero set that was loaded with 20 volatile Italians all suffering from cheap brandy, 18-hour days and the flu—wind machines flying, eyes full of rubber cement—and the producer swearing on his mother's grave that we'd all get paid next week and Mr. Bava, the perfect gentleman, kind, silent, amused, always standing in the shadows in a state of perfect composure.

"Hard to believe, in retrospect, that this was his first feature. Lord alone knows that I am difficult enough. I didn't like my wig—I changed that four times. I couldn't understand Italian. I didn't want to play a Chopin Waltz. I certainly didn't want to allow them to tear open my dress and expose my breasts so they got a double that I didn't like at all—so I ended up doing it anyway—drunk, 18, embarrassed, and not very easy to be around. He liked me, though. We had a mutual love affair going—with his dog.

"I always wanted to make a silent film with Mario Bava. No one I can think of could equal him in grabbing those wonderful silent landscapes of such ominous suspension and glorious, menacing impact. I, personally, think that black and white suited him best. It allowed him to express this terrible tension with perfect finesse, always walking the highwire between drama and melodrama, never falling off the rope. An exquisite balancing act, bold, baroque and beautiful."

The years have been kind to this masterpiece. In fact, for me it towers above any genre film I've seen in the subsequent decades. There was only one Mario Bava. There certainly was only one rival to Dracula, and that was Arturo Dominici as Javuto. There is one Queen of Horror, and one only: Barbara Steele. And only one country produced films which truly sang to my heart, and that country was Italy. One can only hope history repeats itself and this (black!) magic appears again. □

Christopher S. Dietrich's interview with Barbara Steele ran in *Imagi-Movies* 1:2 and 1:3.

One of the new adversaries in the MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS movie.

MORTAL KOMBAT

Directed by Paul Anderson. New Line Cinema. 8/95. 101 mins. With: Robin Shou, Linden Ashby, Bridgette Wilson, Cary Hiroyuki Tagawa.

Hong Kong has nothing to worry about if this is the best that America can produce in the way of martial arts fantasy. Forget that the story betrays the video game origin; the characters are dull, and the cast, especially the American leads, are too uncharismatic to overcome the deficiency. The production design is fanciful, but the fight scenes are too prosaic; except for the fact that the opponents are often CGI or prosthetics, they could have been cut from any standard martial arts film. What was needed was some of the liberating aerobatics scene in a Ching Siu Tung film. On the plus side, the four-armed Goro is a standout piece of makeup effects work.

● Steve Biodrowski

MORTAL KOMBAT looks nice, but the action and acting are underwhelming.

SEVEN

Directed by David Fincher. New Line Cinema. 8/95. With: Morgan Freeman, Brad Pitt, Gwyneth Paltrow, Kevin Spacey.

Pundits and soothsayers are fond of comparing the fall of the Roman Empire to the perceived moral bankruptcy of modern America. Foremost are the politicians who have rallied against Hollywood, decrying the evils of music, film and television. How ironic then that SEVEN, while on the surface seeming to epitomize the very bankruptcy they denounce, actually has at its heart a disturbing parable about the wages of sin.

In his self-described holy quest, the film's killer (Spacey) is certainly no Jesus spreading wisdom to a misguided populace. Rather, his is a mission of violent example, illustrating the consequences of vice—the Seven Deadly Sins—through a mural of dead and mutilated bodies. The unnamed city, an erstwhile Sodom and Gomorrah, is his canvas, and Freeman and Pitt's detectives are his unwilling disciples. The lessons he teaches are disturbing, not so much for their violence—save for Wrath, they all occur off screen—but for the cut they leave in our moral fabric. His message is incisive and lingers long after each body is no longer on screen. Who amongst us, he invariably asks, has not felt Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Envy, Wrath, Pride and Lust? Who, at some point in our lives, has not been disparaging of or wished ill upon at least one of his victims—be it the obese Gluttony victim, the vain Pride victim, or the drug-dealing Sloth victim?

What the film achieves is not simply an orchestration of suspense and gore, but a penetrating examination of our (i.e., the audience's) own moral ambiguity. Genre fans are no longer horrified by gruesome special effects. While we are amazed or disappointed by their level of artistry, it is the old Hitchcockian notion—that the mundane and everyday hide the greatest horrors—that works to greatest effect here. One leaves the film feeling dirty, as if some mote on our idyllic perception of reality has been brazenly exposed.

Our complicity with the film's targeted moral structure may lack the extremeness represented here, but it is an undeniable, lasting presence. While politicians like Bob Dole may simply add SEVEN to their Hollywood blacklists, the movie boasts a resonance that forces viewers to question, be it consciously or unconsciously, their own moral fortitude. Art and expression are not always pretty and clean, but one measure of their worth is how it makes us question ours. In that respect SEVEN succeeds; for, beyond its trappings and artifices, it hauntingly reflects upon the human condition.

●●●● Matthew F. Saunders

...that the town lays claim to a major tourist attraction: a sea monster named Orky. Orky befriends the children and helps Dad relax and learn how important they are to him. Also included are bad guys who dump toxic waste into the ocean. The minimal creature effects are reserved until the last third of the film. Orky is seen for the first time lying on the floor of his cave beneath the sea: a cross between a baby seal and a walrus—a sweet, innocent, childlike monster. This is a film about children, for children. Ignore the New Age rhetoric and the confused message at the end, and you'll find this an endearing fairy tale.

●● Sonja Burres

MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS: THE MOVIE

Directed by Bryan Spicer. 20th Century-Fox. 6/95. 95 mins. With: Karen Ashley, Johnny Young Bosch, Steve Cardenas, Jason David Frank.

Just about what you would expect from a movie derived from the TV show: it plays to its core audience with little attempt to bring in outsiders. This is definitely a kids' movie; adults will be bored but not too insulted. The plot's a trifle, but at least things keep moving, and the film is colorful in some of its production design and effects. CGI stands in for the rubber suits (the movie, unlike the show, uses no footage from the original Japanese TV series) and thus sacrifices part of the cheesy charm in order to look glossy. A sequence wherein a dinosaur skeleton comes to life is a standout, but the film is a tad sexist toward its female Rangers, who usually end up screaming for help during the battle sequences.

● Steve Biodrowski

TALL TALE: Patrick Swayze is Pecos Bill, one of three fantasy heroes who come to the aid of Daniel (Nick Stahl).

STRANGE DAYS

Directed by Kathryn Bigelow. 20th Century-Fox. 8/95. 145 mins. With: Ralph Fiennes, Angela Bassett, Juliette Lewis, Tom Sizemore.

Science fiction remains such an oft-neglected genre that, when critics finally do lavish praise, one might be led to expect something great. That didn't happen with STRANGE DAYS, the turn-of-the century thriller from James Cameron and Kathryn Bigelow. The film is almost fanatic in the way it pushes hot buttons meant to trigger a response in the audience, but in using the future as a metaphor for social situations of today, this vision of the future simply seems like old news. And ultimately, for all its radical pretensions, the film is the usual conservative apologia: it's not corrupt institutions responsible for the decay on view; it's just a few corrupt men, and if we could just weed out the bad apples, everything would be fine. Despite the weak attempt at moralizing, the characterizations of Fiennes and Bassett are ultimately involving, and Bigelow is too talented to do anything that doesn't have at least some (and occasionally too much) visceral punch.

●● Steve Biodrowski

TALL TALE

Directed by Jeremiah Chechik. Disney 97 mins. With: Patrick Swayze, Nick Stahl, Scott Glenn, Oliver Platt.

Conventional wisdom says there are only a handful of original stories; all others are just variations. If so, then how we tell the story is what's important. TALL TALE is a not particularly interesting retelling of THE WIZARD OF OZ: instead of Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion, we get Pecos Bill, Paul Bunyan, and John Henry. Daniel, our 12-year-old protagonist, falls asleep in a boat after his father is shot by the bad guy. The rest of the film is like Dorothy's visit to Oz (i.e., is it a dream?). Daniel, with the help of his new friends, learns about the value of hard work and standing up for what you believe.

Talent is invested and wasted on the film. Chechik, who did a marvelous job directing BENNY AND JOON, seems lost here, and Oscar-winning cinematographer Janusz Kaminski spends his time shooting sets. The film is predictable. The journey is boring, and so are the characters. There is great potential within the framework of fantasy to give heroes and villains incredible flair; but Nick Stahl as Daniel, Patrick Swayze as fantasy hero Pecos Bill, and Scott Glenn as Stiles have not one interesting bone among them. All are one-dimensional cartoons who play straight men to the only true entertainment, which is provided by Oliver Platt as Paul Bunyan. The best intentions have gone awry.

● Sonja Burres

Director & co-writer Chris Noonan on his excellent family fantasy BABE, the nicest surprise of '95.

by Michael Lyons

In the brilliantly understated climax, Babe calmly and quietly shepherds a flock, in amusing contrast to the barking sheep dogs in competition.

BABE is a young pig's coming-of-age story, set on a farm where all the livestock talk to one another —but don't call it an "animal movie." That was the objective of director Chris Noonan. "Most animal films suffer from the movie being part drama and part wildlife documentary," he said. "I think people, faced with the challenge of working with animals, very often abandon thoughts of style and move into the realm of 'If the action works, then move on to the next scene.' I was determined that this was not going to be a film like that. This was going to be a film with high style, a film that set up a world that is not the real world but a storybook world, which had a lot of elements of classic film style. We wanted to have a film *noir*ish look to a lot of the lighting."

Producer George Miller (who directed the MAD MAX films) bought the rights to the quirky book by Dick King-Smith in the '80s and ignored all who said it couldn't be transferred to live-action. Miller co-wrote the script with Noonan, who had been part of Miller's production company, Kennedy/Miller, for many years. BABE would be his feature debut; although many first-time directors would have been terrified of such a daunting project, Noonan actually "had a huge amount of confidence, because of the nature of the story. I believed it existed on so many levels, from a very simple, charming, and whimsical story about a pig who wanted to become a sheepdog, through to an allegory about prejudice in the human world."

Another element that Noonan enjoyed was the underlying dark edge. "The last thing that I wanted to do was something with a saccharin quality to it," he noted. "The darker side was one of the great attractions for me. There's a very strong dark side to [classic Disney films]. I remember watching FANTASIA and being completely terrified by the sinister qualities and enjoying the terror. I actually believe that kids love the dark side and feel that they're just being fooled when stories are presented where the world is rosy, sweetness, and light."

Most children wouldn't feel fooled by BABE. The film features farm animals wondering who's going to be Christmas dinner, sheep being attacked by wolves, and an opening scene in which Babe's mother is led off to slaughter. Noonan admits that he became skittish about this particular moment as the release date approached. "I had this fantasy of adults taking their children to see a cute film about a talking pig, sitting through that scene, and thinking, 'Oh my god, what I have brought them to?'"

With its $8.7-million opening weekend in August, such scenes obviously didn't scare away the kids. "Without that darkness, I don't think the film would have penetrated and gotten to as many people as it reached," said Noonan. Before reaching so many people, BABE underwent quite an exhaustive production schedule. From pre-production through final cut, the entire project consumed seven years of Noonan's life. Part of the challenge was the aspect of talking animals, which was eventually achieved through a combination of computer generated imagery and animatronic puppetry, courtesy of Jim Henson's Creature Shop.

More amazing than any effect, however, is the fact that a majority of the scenes were achieved by using actual animals. Noonan credits this to animal trainer Karl Miller. "He's a filmmaker first and a trainer second," said Noonan. "His eyes are not on 'How can I get together a great animal training technique here?' They're on 'How can I get the results the director wants?' He constantly comes up with ideas and sort of says, 'Instead of the animal just doing this, I could get it to do this *and* that at the same time, and that would work toward the end of the scene.' He's always thinking of ways of enriching the drama."

All of BABE's characters benefitted from Miller's care, especially Fly, the beautiful sheep-dog who becomes Babe's maternal comfort when the young pig first arrives on the farm. "Jessie, the dog who played Fly, is the Academy Award nominee of the animal kingdom," said Noonan. "We used a number of animals to represent almost every other character. With Fly, even though we were training three other dogs in parallel with Jessie, there was no other dog who had such warmth in the eyes."

Throughout production, Noonan was constantly amazed by Jessie's performance. The director points to one scene in particular, which occurs after the farmer's wicked and pampered cat gives Babe the horrific news about the fate of all pigs. Shocked, Babe walks to the farmhouse to ask Fly whether this is true. "There's a long tracking shot from a full figure of Fly into a tight close-up of her face, with Fly keeping eye contact with Babe, off camera," recalled Noonan. "A big Panavision camera on a dolly, with three camera crews riding straight at this animal, and the dog doesn't look away; it doesn't flinch; it doesn't in any way acknowledge this camera coming right up to it. That shot I find completely remarkable." Another remarkable scene occurs when Ferdinand the duck coaxes Babe

Left: In a comic highlight of animal action and animatronics, Babe and Ferdinand the duck steal a clock. Right: James Cromwell as Farmer Hoggett keeps the animals from completely stealing the show.

Director Chris Noonan, on location.

to help steal the farmer's alarm clock. "It was extraordinarily tough," said Noonan. "There are a lot of separate pieces of 'animal action' that required training and planning."

Now that BABE is behind him, Noonan says that he feels a little like a father who has sent his child out into the world. "I sort of want to be in every theatre to make sure it goes okay," he laughed. "Of course, I had fantasies that it would hit number one the first week and stay at number one for at least twenty weeks." This type of response may be slightly exaggerated, but BABE definitely struck a chord with audiences this year. "It's almost a career in itself, this movie," said Noonan. "It was a big gamble of time that required a great deal of faith, and I suppose I had that faith in the story. But, it is still very gratifying to see that faith pay off as well as it has."

With that much time invested in BABE, one would think the crew (which numbered about 200) would have formed a familial bond. Noonan, however, sees it another way: "Toward the end, it sort of reminded me of a religious cult," he joked. "A group of people who came together for this very obscure goal, which would seem like it was completely crazy to people who hadn't been initiated into the cult."

Movie-goers were among the "initiated," and with its timeless, enduring qualities, there's no doubt that many more will be worshipping BABE for years to come. □

How could you ever eat bacon again?

BABE

Universal Pictures present a Kennedy/Miller Film. 8/95, 91 mins. Directed by Chris Noonan. Producers: Miller, Doug Mitchell, Bill Miller. Director of photography: Andrew Lesnie, A.C.S. Editors: Marcus D'arcy & Jay Friedkin. Music: Nigel Westlake. Production & costume design: Roger Ford. Animatronic characters: Jim Henson's Creature Shop. Sheep characters: John Cox & Robotechnology. Animation and visual effects: Rhythm & Hues. Animal action: Karl Lewis Miller .Screenplay by George Miller & Noonan, from the book by Dick King-Smith.

Farmer Hoggett........James Cromwell
Mrs. Hoggett........Magda Szubanski
Babe's voice........Christine Cavanaugh
Fly's voice........Miriam Margolyes
Rex's voice........Danny Mann
Narrator........Roscoe Lee Browne

by Michael Lyons

The lines are definitely getting blurred in Hollywood when the real-life story of an Indian princess is produced as an animated feature, and the story of a talking pig is made in live-action. However, just as Disney's POCAHONTAS was perfect for the pen-and-ink world, it seems as if live-action was the proper medium for BABE.

From its whimsical opening title sequences, BABE's director Chris Noonan creates a warm, distinctive world, as he tells the story of the title character, an orphaned pig who comes to Hoggett farm, where he is adopted by the border collie Fly who teaches him to become a champion sheepdog (or "sheep-pig," if you prefer).

This is more than just a gimmicky family film. Though upbeat, there is also a darker element at work: the threat of the slaughter house lurks always unseen but just off-screen, preventing the film from floating away into pure whimsy. Combining elements of Aesop's fables and ANIMAL FARM, BABE also becomes a statement on class systems, bigotry, conformity and other traits inherently human. All the time, the film doesn't preach its lesson but, like all great fables, allows it to weave amidst the story.

BABE defied expectations to become a successful non-Disney family film. Inset: Fly the sheep dog really seems to maintain eye contact during a conversation with the titular talking pig, who wants to herd sheep, too.

It also allows for a great deal of character development, not only from the title character and Fly but also from the entire eccentric menagerie that populate Hoggett farm: Ferdinand the duck, who thinks he's a rooster; Fly's mate, Rex, the stern companion to Farmer Hoggett, and a trio of mice, who serve as a sort of Greek chorus, reading the film's title cards (in high-pitched, Chipmunk-like voices).

It's not all animal business, however: Cromwell and Szubanski turn in great performances as the eccentric Hoggetts. Cromwell, in particular, brings a tremendous amount of depth to his character, who throughout the course of the film gains a new respect for the animals on his farm.

As a backdrop to all of this, Noonan and cinematographer Andrew Lesnie have created a beautiful looking film by allowing the camera to capture all of the details not only of the animals but of the beautiful Australian countryside where BABE was filmed. In tandem with this, trainer Karl Miller achieved such wonderful performances from the animals that the audience never once feels that they are taking commands from off-camera—this is just plain great acting! The scene in which Fly watches Farmer Hoggett sell her litter of puppies, ranks as one of this year's most emotional moments at the movies.

BABE is likeable without being overtly cute and realistic without being nasty. It is that rarity among movie-going experiences: a genuine surprise. □

VIRTUOSITY

Directed by Brett Leonard. Paramount 8/95. 105 mins. With: Denzel Washington, Russell Crowe, Kelly Lynch, Louise Fletcher.

Though improving upon HIDEAWAY, Brett Leonard's VIRTUOSITY manages to underuse both its actors and its premise, that a VR police training simulation can enter the real world via a body created with nano-technology. Like Leonard's previous LAWNMOWER MAN, this had the potential to explore the ramifications of VR in a new way. What we get is an unexciting action-adventure that simply uses the technology as a starting point. Washington seems bored as cop-turned-convict Parker Barnes, searching for some way to flesh out his predictable character, another in a long line of protagonists who must redeem past mistakes done in the name of getting the bad guy.

And for a VR program that supposedly embodies the collective profiles of 183 serial killers, S.I.D. 6.7 is exceedingly bland. One would expect a creature of such homicidal knowledge to burst with murderous creativity. Though Crowe is entertaining, in as much as he's allowed, S.I.D.'s efforts at mass murders and "grandiose performances" are largely underwhelming, and he lacks the essential jeopardy a creature of his potential should create. Epitomizing this lack of jeopardy is the film's anti-climactic ending in which Barnes, having already dispatched S.I.D., must disable one of his bombs. When an explosive device can upstage the story's villain, you've got a dud any way you look at it.

● Matthew F. Saunders

In VIRTUOSITY, Russell Crowe's VR villain enters the real world but never makes a credible threat.

ANIMATION

BAREFOOT GEN

Directed by Masaki Mori. Nakazawa. Streamline-Tara Releasing, 8/94. 85 mins. Dubbed. Voices: Catherine Battistone, Iona Morris, Brianne Siddal, Kurk Thornton.

Based on cartoonist Keiji Nakazawa's true-life experiences in the aftermath of Hiroshima, BAREFOOT GEN scores as an affecting account of one boy's attempts to deal with the all-encompassing horror of the bombing while fighting for his mother's and infant sister's survival. Though saddled with dated drawing, this speaks volumes, making an impassioned plea for peace while avoiding bathos. Director Mori's renditions of the atomic holocaust remain among the most harrowing images that the medium has produced. A work of arresting compassion and humanity that wrings the heart even as it commands the eye, this is a must for anime buffs and serious filmgoers, as it presents the sheer indomitable will of the human spirit with unblinkered veracity and scope.

●●●● Todd French

The horrors of Hiroshima are portrayed in BAREFOOT GEN.

THE PEBBLE AND THE PENGUIN

Directed by Don Bluth. MGM. 4/95. 74 mins. Voices: Martin Short, James Belushi, Tim Curry.

As a kind of back-handed compliment, this is probably Don Bluth's best work in years. The story, of innocent penguin Hubie and his journey to bring the perfect pebble to his true love, does contain bizarre character design, distracting graphics, and a mediocre score, but it *doesn't* contain the weak story lines that dragged down Bluth's recent features. Wisely, the animators took full advantage of the antarctic setting, using various colors to prevent washing the screen out with all white snow. The filmmakers have also used the setting to stage two spectacular action sequences, one involving a giant leopard seal and another showing Hubie and his sidekick Rocko pursued by killer whales.

The film also takes full advantage of its vocal talent: Short's high-pitched falsetto matches Hubie perfectly; Belushi's Rocko, like THE LION KING's Timon, gets most of the laughs; and Curry provides a perfectly narcissistic tone for Hubie's rival (although the character looks like a cross between Darkwing Duck and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST's Gaston). What's missing is any attempt to pull audiences into the story. The film looks nice and is for the most part easy to watch, but leaves one feeling as cold as the glaciers that float by. PEBBLE may not have earned an honored place in the current animation resurgence, but it does serve as a ray of hope for Bluth fans.

● Michael Lyons

RUNAWAY BRAIN

Directed by Chris Bailey. Walt Disney. 8/95. 7 mins. With: Wayne Allwine, Kelsey Grammer.

It's official: the Walt Disney Company has developed a self-deprecating sense of humor. In THE LION KING, Zazu warbled "It's a Small World" off-key, and A GOOFY MOVIE took satirical shots at the Disney theme parks. Now RUNAWAY BRAIN turns Mickey Mouse, the Company's corporate logo, into, well, the Tazmanian Devil.

In a spoof of mad scientist movies, Mickey finds himself the Guinea-pig of a bizarre experiment, in which his brain is exchanged with that of a crazed monster (who bears a striking resemblance to Pete, the villain of many a Mickey short). This allows the animators to cut loose from Mickey's clean-cut image, with fangs, bloodshot eyes and shaggy fur, while the hulking beast still speaks with Mickey's falsetto (voiced by Allwine).

The story department has added nice touches: Mickey plays a "Mortal Kombat"-like video game, featuring Dopey and SNOW WHITE's Wicked Witch, and the evil scientist (voiced by Kelsey Grammer) is named Dr. Frankenollie (a nod to famed Disney animators Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston). On the whole, RUNAWAY BRAIN is fashioned not in the sunny formula of old Disney shorts but in a more edgy, frenetic style of Tex Avery's MGM cartoons. Its brief length packs more humor and action than many feature films.

●●● Michael Lyons

LASERBLAST

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(Kent Smith), who blames the death of his first wife Irena on her indulgence of fantasies. The theme of parental neglect runs heavily throughout this charming children's tale, which comes to a satisfying conclusion.

The last three films are Boris Karloff's trilogy: ISLE OF THE DEAD (1945), BEDLAM (1946), and THE BODY SNATCHER (1945). In ISLE, he stars as a general who quarantines an island ravaged by plague, then succumbs to a superstitious notion that one of their number is a *vorvolaka*, a kind of Grecian vampire. The picture suffers from a dull middle; however, the sequence in which a cataleptic is prematurely buried and revives, is excellent.

BEDLAM deals with the inhumane treatment of the insane. The film is very wittily written and features one of Karloff's finest performances as Master Sims, cruel head of the asylum. Anna Lee is also quite good as Nell Bowen, who feels for Sims' mistreated prisoners and who is committed on a pretext to the institution.

Lastly, there is THE BODY SNATCHER, based on Robert Louis Stevenson's classic story. Karloff is again in great form as the cabman who secures cadavers on the side and cynically asserts authority over Dr. MacFarlane (Henry Daniell, in his finest performance). This, one of Robert Wise's most masterfully directed films, demonstrates qualities that are benchmarks of other Lewton films—chiascuro cinematography, a richly detailed soundtrack with radio-like attention to background detail, and a subtle score by Roy Webb.

In many ways, Lewton was ahead of his time: he peopled his films with intelligent characters battling guilt, fear, and sexual repression; he refused to indulge in the racial stereotypes of the time, which keeps his films from seeming dated today; and his women are typically strong, resourceful, and in no way inferior to their male compatriots. This laserdisc collection presents the whole of his horror oeuvre with sharp transfers and chapter encoding, which allows easy access for replaying those special moments. Unlike the Criterion release of CAT PEOPLE, there is no extensive commentary (Robert Wise gives a rambling reminiscence which runs partway through BODY SNATCHER), nor are there any trailers or other bonuses. Still, Lewton was one filmmaker whose work spoke for itself and well-deserves this quality presentation. □

TERRY GILLIAM

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this time a girl, who shares his quest for fantastical adventures. In fact, the film is more of a TIME BANDITS-type romp—unlike BRAZIL, which was nightmarish in its obsession. "BRAZIL was getting something out of my system which was cathartic, whereas MUNCHAUSEN is perceived as fun, even though it's slipping into the same territory. There are two main characters: a 75-year-old man and a 10-year-old girl living in the 18th century. Death figures largely in the story. It's about lying your way out of death and defeating it. Everything I do becomes heavier and heavier. I like dealing with subjects that are a bit more meaty. It became a story about Universal and me: the battle between the realists and the fantasists."

Principal photography took place at Cine Citta Studios in Rome. The film boasted a host of guest appearances, from Eric Idle as the fastest man alive, to Sting as a wounded officer, to Robin Williams as the King Of The Moon, and even Jonathan Pryce turned up again, this time in a supporting role representing the forces of the "realists," who declares of the Baron, "He won't get far on hot air and fantasies." In fact, his character fires the lethal shot that fells the Baron; however, in a neat inversion of BRAZIL, this time the unhappy ending turns out to be the dream, and the Baron is allowed to ride off into the movie sunset.

Accounts of the film's troubled production might give the impression that Gilliam went through a war. "That's exactly what it was," he claimed. "It did leave some pretty deep scars. I had really good people, but there were the English and the Italians, and they didn't get along. The Italians were brilliant! The production was what was appalling. The actual coordination and organization of the thing was a disaster, and we also had a brilliant but very slow lighting cameraman, Peppino [Giuseppe] Rotunno. He could only work at his pace, and I couldn't change that. I almost left. At one point, I said, 'It's him or me,' but the idea of firing him is like firing the godfather—you can't do that. That's what films are like: you get into these situations, and they're not just simple little things. It doesn't work that way. You have to cast and crew the film very carefully. If you don't, you pay the price."

One source of support during the hectic production was Eric Idle. Gilliam credits the former fellow Python member with helping him stay sane throughout the production (although "The staying sane part was questionable!" he laughed). "Eric was really great," acknowledged the appreciative director. "Those are the moments when I really like Eric, for all of his selfishness and pig-headedness and awfulness. He was putting up with a lot of shit—everybody was—and he stuck it out. I think he really felt that we were making something worthwhile."

Gilliam directs a fiery fight scene from BRAZIL—the samurai warrior that confronts Sam Lowry when he fantasizes himself in his heroic persona.

The film, Gilliam's most lavish and extravagant, went over budget with its huge sets and elaborate special effects—the only time the director has ever allowed one of his productions to go out of control. "It was my fault," Gilliam allowed, "because I went into a situation that was doomed. The whole thing was a big mess. It was badly produced. We had a nightmare making it. We managed to make a film that was almost as good as the one I set out to make; and then in order to win over the new studio people, I made cuts to save money. I made the choice. Nobody forced me. I made them to win over these people so that they would be behind the film, and then they didn't release it. That's the only thing that ultimately drove me crazy. I think there would be a slightly better film there with a few more minutes added in. I think the thing is a bit rushed and frenzied and tiresome. It's hard for me to judge, because I made it, and all the things that went wrong are still in the forefront of my mind when I'm viewing it, but I think it's a pretty extraordinary fucking film. What's interesting is how it seemed to be disliked by so many people."

MUNCHAUSEN never made back its money for Columbia Pictures, the U.S. distributor, turning out to be another domestic box office failure. This, combined with fallout from the battle over BRAZIL, resulted in an even worse—although undeserved—reputation for its director. "The basic problem with MUNCHAUSEN was that they didn't release the film," Gilliam complained. "They made 117 prints. An art-house film goes out with 400 prints. The film wasn't released. Then I end up with this reputation: 'This guy makes these big, out-of control films, and they they make no money.' That's totally wrong. I made one film that went over budget, and that was it. All you have to do is look at what I've done, and most of the films were done for a fraction of what anybody else would've made them for."

Despite poor box office, the travails of making MUNCHAUSEN, and the difficulty of releasing BRAZIL, Jonathan Pryce claims he would do it all again just for the experience of working with the director. "On the set, Gilliam is like a febrile young boy with an erector set, eager to try unusual things at the spur of the moment. He has extraordinary enthusiasm," acknowledged the actor. "But once he starts working it's a cooperative venture. He likes actors and loves what we do. It's a thrill for him to watch people working. He never gets bored. He's very supportive and he's not obstructive to anybody who's contributing.

"Backstage he's very difficult because he's very insistent on getting things absolutely right. He drives people hard. But it shows on screen why he persists in perfection in what they do. He doesn't accept second best from anyone. At the same time he's very, very funny."

The debilitating experience of making a large scale film and then seeing it effectively abandoned by its distributor led Gilliam to conclude,"I'm getting a bit frightened of the battles that ensue when you've got an expensive film. Everybody panics, and the pressures are greater to make it more like every other film. You spend lots of money and make something extraordinary, and they panic because it's not like the other ones. Then they do everything in their power to reduce it to something that's understandable to them. The worst thing about it was that it was really hard to get going again. That's why, when FISHER KING came along, I thought, 'Here's a nice script. It's easy, it's quick; it has no special effects, by my standard. They want me to do it. I'll do it.'"

Gilliam's next project was more well-received by critics and by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which presented Mercedes Ruehl an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress as Jeff Bridges' wife. Gilliam's quest for the Holy Grail was finally getting closer to being realized, thanks to a solid script by Richard La Gravenese, to which he could add his patented visual style like frosting on a well made cake. His familiar techno-noisome landscapes, populated by larger-than-life visionaries and mythical demons, came charging through the screen with vivid allegorical figures—this time with Robin Williams as an engaging bum (and former professor of Medieval history) who helps an arrogant, unemployed talk radio host (Jeff Bridges) see a romantic, magical side to New York City. Bridges was brilliant as the self-absorbed deejay who finds a change of heart, and Robin Williams was outstanding as the zany, wise, heroic and emotionally needy character in the parable of "The Fisher King," which each of them represents during the course of the tale. The special effects are less impressive this time when compared to Gilliam's earlier efforts, but the recurring hallucinatory knight on horseback—a classic Gilliam image, filmed in gaudy colors and eerie stage lighting—works perfectly, in context.

"The script was going around for years, and everyone was afraid of it," Gilliam revealed. "It sat at Disney for awhile, and they were turning it into a caper film about stealing the Grail. Richard was dutifully writing his film and sticking all these caperesque things in it. He was so desperate to get the film made that he was rewriting it, and the producers were so desperate they were going to get Jim Cameron, who I think is all wrong for FISHER KING, but he was a hot director."

Gilliam took the script back in

its original direction. With this, he proved (if there was ever any doubt) that he was more than a generator of outrageous imagery; he is a director who can take someone else's material and make it his own through the application of a personal style that tells the story effectively without being obtrusive. That style was formed from a variety of influences, some obvious, other less so: Akira Kurasawa, Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman, Luis Bunuel, Walt Disney, Orson Welles. Gilliam also cites Tex Avery and Chuck Jones ("You can't beat that stuff; it was more surreal than half of what the surrealists were doing") and calls Stanley Kubrick "my great hero for a long time." But, much to the director's own surprise, another Stanley was revealed to be a major influence: "When we went to the Sundance Institute and showed FISHER KING to film students, one of the other pros there was Stanley Donen, who had done SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS, FUNNY FACE, SINGING IN THE RAIN, and all those great musicals. I looked at a lot of these clips, and I realized I should have dedicated FISHER KING to him, because he had this huge influence on me. I just never recognized it, because I didn't discover films as films until I was about 16 or 17—those were just 'the movies' that I went to. I loved them, but I had dismissed them, because by the time I was discovering movies, I was into THE SEVENTH SEAL, 81/2—you know, black-and-white European jobs. Those were the films I thought were a big influence, but these other ones were, too."

Two books, *The Battle of Brazil* and *Losing the Light*, had related, in minute detail, Gilliam's problems with the studios during his two preceding films. This gave the director something of a bad reputation around Hollywood—a fact of which he seems proud. "It was a healthy bad reputation," he insisted. "It's very good to have a bad reputation in Hollywood, I've decided. What it does is chase away a lot of the idiots that come running because you've made a good film. Most of them stay away. The braver ones come in, and usually they're more intelligent as well. On FISHER KING it was great, because all the studio people had read *The Battle of Brazil*, and they were waiting for me to behave in some outrageous, explosive way. I never raised my voice once. I just smiled and was very polite. That was very useful, because they were constantly terrified of what might happen, so they tip-toed around me, and that's good."

Gilliam's work as an animator started him in the field of special effects—which he provided for the Monty Python films, such as THE MEANING OF LIFE.

Despite the smooth production, Gilliam found himself waging a familiar battle in the editing phase. "There's a side of me that is practical and pragmatic," he claimed. "I sit there and say, 'These are the soldiers I've got; these are the soldiers they've got. Will it work, or will it not? Let's go into battle and see what happens.' At the end, we got into a situation where they thought the film was too long. I said, 'That's fine, but I don't know how to cut it down to two hours.' They wanted to cut out fourteen minutes. We were getting great ratings from test audiences early on. We were in the top two brackets; 80% liked it. They kept pushing and pushing and pushing for me to make cuts. We eventually sat down at the Polo Lounge. All the Studio guys were there. I said to them, 'All right. What do you want me to cut?' I suggested we do one more screening: 'You tell me what cuts you want, and if there is a significant difference in the cards after the second version, I will *consider* making the cuts.' I was being as equivocal as possible. They came up with about 41/2 minutes of cuts. I knew what they were going to be anyway, so we had them all prepared.

"We made the cuts, and it was a terrible screening," he continued. "From the moment the audience for the cut version walked in, it was a better audience than the previous screening. You could feel it. I thought, 'I'm fucked! I'm so fucked! It's going to play 100% better, and I'm going to be stuck with these cuts that I don't want to make.' And of course, they had a feeding frenzy: 'Well, let's cut some more things out!' Suddenly, they were coming up with the most stupid, impossible, ridiculous cuts. Then when I showed my version again, the cards were the same as the cut version. It was a draw, but I said, 'If my name goes on the film, I'm not going to do it.' They said, '*What?!*' I said, 'You forced this fucking system down my throat! The cards are the same. My name is on it. The cuts go back in.' And they went apeshit. They wrote me this letter saying that I was totally selfish, I was not team player, blah, blah, blah, I hadn't made the cuts, and I would hurt the financial possibilities of the film. I wasn't taking their calls. I said it was total bullshit. To me the films are the length they play best at. I wasn't trying to make a long film, but if you start taking things out, then the whole thing starts collapsing on itself. I think it's better to be too long than too short."

This final cut, released as Gilliam wanted, is the director's most mainstream and easily accessible film, yet even it couldn't please everyone. "I get very strong responses from critics, which I'm happy to have. At times, it gets tiresome, but I really love the fact that they either love it or hate it. FISHER KING, for me, of all my films is the easiest to take. Yet, two thumbs down from Siskel and Ebert. Alexander Walker, who's one of the big critics here, just vomited all over it. It's very interesting that one gets that kind of response, that kind of venom. What I want to know is what gets them that angry?"

When that film premiered at the Toronto Festival, Gilliam was quoted as saying, "Thank you for justifying my decision to sell out." Is that the way he really felt? "No, it was just something to say," he laughed. "It was the first studio film I did, so by my standards, it was selling out. It was somebody else's script. I still had complete control of it, and made the film I wanted to make. By those standards, it was great. The whole point in saying things is to keep stirring things up, and if people want to take it seriously, they can. Some people probably did think that. It's like when Bob Dylan went electric. If I had made a film that I wasn't happy with, that was dictated by other people, and made cuts that I didn't want to make, then that would be different. I had total control of it. I thought it would kick-start me, get me going again, which it did. It was the first film I'd ever done that I didn't have final cut. I was also the completion guarantor. If it went over budget, it came out of my pocket. This was all to show 'what a good boy he is—whatever you think he is, you're wrong.' I walked right in there, my head in the lion's mouth: 'Watch it. Nothing up my sleeve. Here we go!' Then we finish it under budget; it's my cut, and it's successful. What more do they want?"

Despite good reviews, strong boxoffice, and Academy Awards, THE FISHER KING did not jump start Gilliam's career quite as quickly as he and his fans would have liked. "I've reached a point where I don't know which story I want to tell anymore," he said of selecting his next project. "After FISHER KING, I went a bit crazy. I was desperate, because suddenly I was 50 years old, and I could count the number of films on one hand that I'm going to do in the rest of my life. I went manic trying to get the next film going very quickly, and it turned out to be the longest gap between films that I've ever had."

Now that 12 MONKEYS is completed [*see page 16*], Gilliam is trying to get back to making films from scripts which he developed himself. The first of these is DON QUIXOTE. "It's not my story, but it's my adaptation, the way I want to do it," he said. "There's another one, which is the one I really should be doing, called THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE. That's really mine; it was written by myself and Richard La Gravenese. It's about a middle-aged detective who is effectively having a nervous breakdown and ends up in a kid's fantasy world. It's very autobiographical. We've been trying to get it off the ground, but everybody's afraid, because it's so expensive."

Does Gilliam ever anticipate a time when he will be able to make his films without the studio hassles that have become a recurring motif in his career? "I hope not. I have no idea what would happen. I can't work in that kind of vacuum. I need things to fight against. You need walls. You need parameters to bang your head against. You have to have people to say, 'You can't

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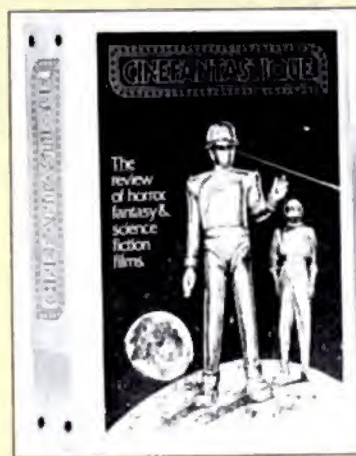

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go that way.' Then you say, 'Fuck it! I'll go down this way.' Sometimes it becomes a better way out. I don't want to have a situation with no parameters. I don't know how to work like that. Films are products of specific times and places and combinations of people.

"Certainly, when I'm making a film, I get very fatalistic about these things," he continued. "I seriously believe the film is making itself. I'm not making it; I'm just the hand that writes. I think with any artist, whether you're a sculptor or whatever, a thing starts to form itself. Either you respond to it, respond to the materials you're given, or you fight against it. You do both things, in fact. Given complete freedom, I don't know what I'd do. I would probably just spin off in a million directions and make a formless mass. Films are weird, and that's probably the reason I like making them. Drawing a cartoon is one thing. It's just me and that piece of paper, but in films, you have to deal with so many things, so many different kinds of people: money, talent, time. It's the closest thing to being in the real world, *and* it's a totally false world. That's what I like about it, and I also hate it for that same reason. You're so divided in a million different directions, you begin to lose yourself in it. You're supposed to be the calm eye of the hurricane, and everybody's coming to you. It's like you're the Wizard of Oz. As long as they believe in you, and the power of the Wizard, then the film gets made. The minute you lose their confidence, the film starts falling apart. Then you become an actor, playing the role of the director."

Still, if Gilliam is forever at odds with the executives, he can take solace in the knowledge that his casts and crews—the people who shared the struggles of making his films—have always supported his vision. "That's the important thing," he acknowledged. "I just get so convinced of my rightness on certain things. I can't see that there can be another way of looking at it. In fact, that's actually died down a bit, as I've gotten older. It's really taken the fun out of life."

Does that mean Gilliam is not as angry as he once was? "Yeah. I'm not so certain, either," he admitted. "What I do know, is that people who have worked on my films, in the end feel satisfied, however awful it was, because their work is up on the screen. As a director, I'm interested in all the aspects of film, so people respond to the fact that I come to the costume department, for example."

"I keep thinking that one day I'll grow up, but it hasn't happened," Gilliam concludes. "I haven't worked life out at all. I keep hoping I'll get some answers by the time I die. I'm 55 now. I think my silliness keeps me young. Mike Palin and I used to always say that there were people who sat at the back of the class and giggled. We were those people. I was on a radio show in Dallas after the release of MUNCHAUSEN, and somebody called who had seen it and said in this southern drawl, 'That was just great, Terry. I giggled in awe.' That perfectly describes my feelings about things. It's so fucking wonderful that you can't bow down and develop solemn tones about it; all you can do is giggle. I want that on my tombstone: 'Terry Gilliam—he giggled in awe.'" □

TWELVE MONKEYS

continued from page 21

Gilliam has suggested only half-jokingly that some of the props built for the movie—the scientists' chairs in the engineering room, for example—would make better occupants for the museum. But, interviewed last June after viewing a rough cut of 12 MONKEYS, he admitted rather wistfully that not all the detail of the work is evident to the viewer.

"That aspect is very small in the film," he said. "We contrast what's going on in [Eternal Night] with the 'real' world; that's what's interesting, rather than the juxtaposition of individual items. In watching, you come away with a sense of these three characters: Bruce, Brad, and Madeleine. All the other stuff is there doing its job, but those aren't the images you necessarily come away with."

And that's okay, according to the filmmaker. Although 12 MONKEYS marks a return to his earlier days of visual splendor, it also reflects his more recent turn, evident in THE FISHER KING, toward closer involvement with his story and characters. As fantastic as much of the film is, he didn't consider himself to have made a fantasy so much as a parable about death and resurrection, both individual and societal. "People used to say BRAZIL was all an invention, but I thought it was a documentary," he said. "However bizarre 12 MONKEYS seems to be, I hope it's an accurate reflection of reality." □

LETTERS

WHO WROTE TOY STORY?

As one of the credited screenwriters of TOY STORY, I would like to think that my partner and I made significant contributions in the creation and fruition of TOY STORY. However, by reading your otherwise impressive expose on the making of TOY STORY [27:2] one would get the impression that all the creative decisions began and ended with Pixar.

This is not true. My partner and I worked hand in hand with Pixar and the Disney executives. We came on to the project when the idea was a convoluted, incomplete treatment and left the development process after writing the first seven drafts of the script. Now, I know that TOY STORY was a team effort. But while Pixar's gigantic efforts in creating TOY STORY should not be understated, we writers do have a place in the story behind TOY STORY.

The reason we were brought onto the project by Disney was because we offered a service that the boys up at Pixar couldn't initially provide on their own. (Believe me, if they didn't need a writer, they wouldn't have hired one.) We created characters, firmed up story arcs and helped to create the structure that would support a feature-length film.

That's not to say that there wasn't a collaborative process. It's not to say that all the brilliant animators didn't take the fruits of our collective labor to create a world that we alone could not have conceived. But, it was rather surprising to read your fine articles and see that my partner and I (along with another writer, Joss Whedon) were completely ignored.

Disney felt strongly enough about our involvement to give us screen credit. Unfortunately, Mr. Sassetter suffers from revisionist history. (For example: he takes credit for the naming of Buzz Lightyear and Woody. In fact, those names were proposed by my partner and I because we had previously used them in an original script.)

TOY STORY was an enormous effort on the collective parts of dozens of talented people. It is Pixar's baby. But, to an extent it is also our baby. I am very proud of my partner's and my contribution to Pixar's process. To be completely ignored after the fact is to deny the truth of what should be a victory for everybody involved.

Alec Sokolow
Santa Monica, CA 90504

[At CFQ we aim to provide in-depth coverage, and if there was a glaring omission in our 22 pages devoted to TOY STORY, it was my failure to mention or interview three of the four credited screenwriters. Besides Mr. Sokolow, both Joss Whedon and Joel Cohen will be receiving screen credit for TOY STORY. The fourth credited scribe, Andrew Stanton, was included prominently in our coverage. The blame for this omission rests with me and my mistaken impression that Joss Whedon was the primary screenwriter. Whedon was the only requested interview, besides Tom Hanks, who was not available to CFQ. Interestingly enough, Mr. Sokolow mentions contributions to the script by his uncredited writing partner, yet fails to mention their name. I trust it was merely an oversight. Lawrence French]

BOND GIRLS 101

Happens every time. A new Bond film, a new Bond leading lady, the same-old: "I'm different from other Bond actresses" interview. It's one thing for an actress, unfamiliar with the franchise until her casting, to stereotype her predecessors, another for a magazine of *Cinefantastique*'s calibre to promulgate the myth. Alan Jones' entire GOLDENEYE article [27:2:6] skews the subject. Has *he* ever seen a Bond film? Who exactly is your "average bimbo Bond girl"? Could it be Honor Blackman, the crack lead pilot of "operation grand-slam," who tossed Bond around the barn in GOLDFINGER? Maybe he means Diana Rigg, who held her own on the ski slopes with Bond and in the raid against Blofeld in OHMSS to become 007's wife. Perhaps it's Barbara Bach as top Soviet agent Amasova, Bond's partner in THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, or Carole Bouquet, the crossbow-wielding, avenging marine archeologist in FOR YOUR EYES ONLY. It certainly cannot be Carey Lowell's CIA operative of LICENSE TO KILL; she gave the same interview upon that film's release.

The fact is, we don't have to "thank director Martin Campbell" for anything. Yes, beautiful women populate Bond films and their advertising campaigns, but with the sole exception of A VIEW TO A KILL's laughable Tanya Roberts, there *are* no "vacuous Barbie doll" Bond leads in the series' 16 previous entries. That none of them have ever been a match for Bond is immaterial; neither has any *man* in the series, including all the "larger than life" villains the superspy has dispatched over the past 30 years.

Ms. Janssen and Scorupco will be lucky to be remembered as fondly as the likes of Blackman, Rigg and Jane Seymour. Unfortunately, Ms. Janssen's comment, "There's not much more to the role than" [Xenia's killing her victims between her thighs] bodes ill for her, at the same time it belies Jones' "this is the PC '90s" thesis. I hope your next issue's GOLDENEYE coverage is superior. Articles a little less condescending and obnoxious than Jones' would be appreciated.

Richard Martin
Wantagh, NY 11793

IN DEFENSE OF MADNESS

I skipped IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS at the theatres, but after your ho-hum review, stating the decline of a most promising director [22:5:59], and with Carpenter as one of my all-time favorites, I had to see this one. I was pleasantly surprised to be scared. MADNESS was excellent from start to finish, in classic horror style. I haven't seen a horror film since PUMPKINHEAD that was worth praising; that delivered the goods and wasn't a sequel. I can't believe this movie's been trashed. Carpenter definitely has still got it and I know I'll be watching MADNESS many years from now.

Tandy Summers
Lomita, CA 90717

CORRECTIONS

In your December issue, on page 6 you misspelled Miklos Rozsa's last name and in your GOLDENEYE article you call Judi Dench Judi Bench. Who have you got proofreading, teenagers from FRIDAY THE 13TH movies?

Michael Klossner
Little Rock, AR 72202

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PANDORA DIRECTIVE

continued from page 5

involved, and I shot footage for which a couple of other actors had already done their work."

How is this compared to working in a film? "It seems altogether different," said McCarthy. "You have a story—words to say and scenes to play—but it is very odd to walk into a room that's all blue: tables, walls, ceiling. The director says, 'Walk there, hit a mark, and turn.' Then you see yourself walking, let's say, inside a space ship. If you're enterprising and see opportunities to do things besides hit your mark and say your line, they'll photograph them.

"That was important to me, to get that kind of feedback. They used a lot of the notions I had; the central story isn't changed, but I tried to give color and variety. You do as much as you can to keep yourself amused. That's what's fun about it. You can't get away with that in a movie, because all the actors are competing for screen time, and they say, 'Are you going to do that?' and the director says, 'I don't think we can use that here.'" □

DISNEY KING

continued from page 15

good can be super good; bad can be super bad. So, I think animation is like fairy tales: they'll always be around."

John Canemaker adds that the multitude of "non-Disney" studios will bring about future diversification. "It's going to force a lot of changes," he said. "Already, many of the studios are trying to figure out ways that they can be as unlike Disney as possible. Disney will always be Disney, and the planet is strewn with the bodies of producers who have tried to go up against Disney on their own turf. That's just not going to work. Disney's got the name, the money and they've got the talent to do it Disney's way. So, the other studios are going to try to find alternative ways of doing it. That can be story, design or character. But, I think it's going to mean a very healthy outcome."

At the very least, these studios continue to breathe new life into an art form and film genre that, ten years ago, seemed as if it was about to become a footnote in motion picture history. Now the possibilities are endless. "Hakuna Matata," indeed. □

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This new book by Maitland McDonagh explores the influence of non-mainstream filmmakers on modern movies. Anyone who has a taste for the movies like SWAMP THING, HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS and NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET will feast on this in-depth look at fringe directors and their craft; Illustrated. **$18.95**

The Frankenstein Scrapbook
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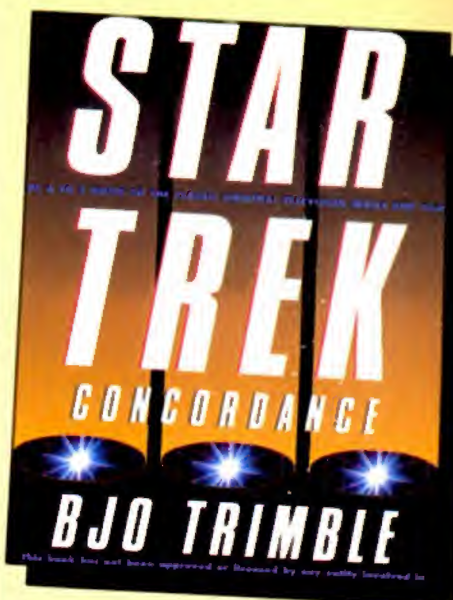

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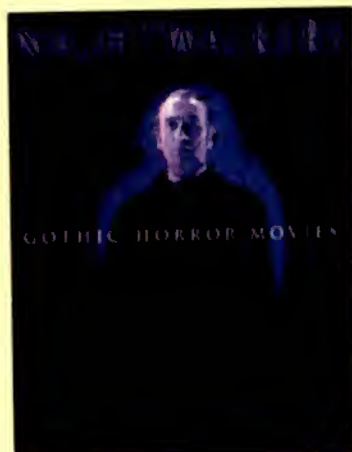

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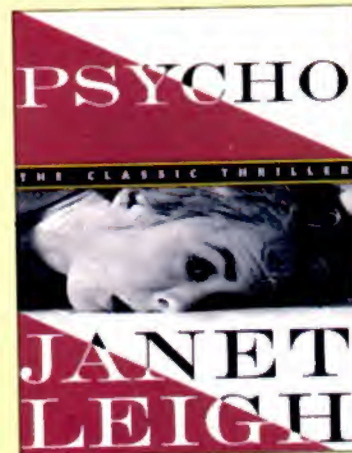
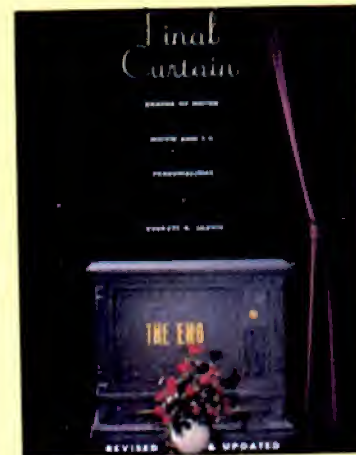


Psycho
Since its release iin the summer of 1960, PSYCHO has fascinated and frightened millions of moviegoers all over the world. Film star Janet Leigh shares behind-the-scenes stories from the making of the classic movie; addresses some long-standing myths and explores the movie's impact on the American public. **$22.00**



Final Curtain
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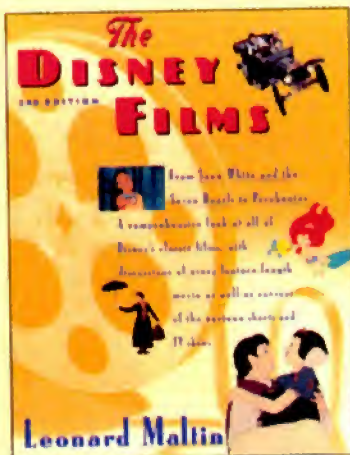

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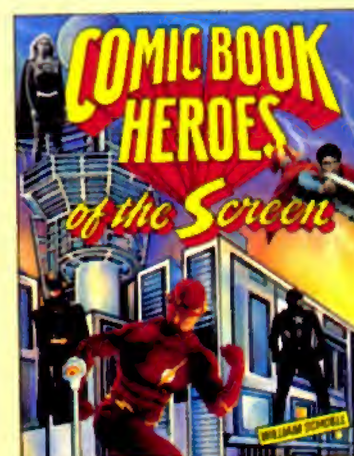

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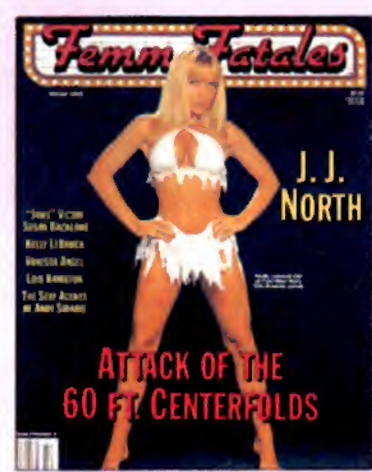

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